JV Ejercito hires PR girl named Dacer

By DJ Yap

WHILE THE KILLING OF PUBLICIST SALvador "Bubby" Dacer has been linked to Joseph Estrada, another Dacer is now doing public relations work for ar Estrada son.

In a strange turn of events, San Juan City Hall has hired Tricia Dacer, a relative of Bubby Dacer, as head of its public information office. The announcement was made on Monday by the camp of San

P [illegible] A10

BUSINESS / B2

Biz Buzz: Lopezes tight-knit but tight-lipped

WORLD / A21

South Africa bars Dalai Lama from peace confab for China's sake

METRO / A19

P40M worth shabu, chemicals, gear in lab seized in QC

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, March 25, 2009 ** 8 sections / Vol. 24 / No. 107 P10 website: www.inquirer.net

LOOT BAG Chemist of PDEA carries a pack of what's believed to be shabu during a raid on a "kitchen-type" lab in Talipapa Village, Quezon City, on Tuesday.

Cha-cha only 20 votes shy

"JEEP NI ERAP PART II" Aboard an award-winning vintage WWII jeep, former President Joseph Estrada seemed to be reprising his 1998 campaign for the highest office in Carmen, Cebu, last week. Though he billed the three-day cortège as "Lakbay Pasasalamat," his transport of choice may be a clue to his intentions. Then, there was, too, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay. Standing next to him is Carmen Mayor Sonia Pua. The .50-caliber machine gun is a toy. But the PNP isn't in a playful mood.

Erap under fire for toy machine gun

By Tarra Quismundo

DEPOSED PRESIDENT Joseph Estrada and Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay may have to choose their rides more carefully next time.

The Philippine National Police is investigating the two opposition leaders for appearing in public on a military jeep with a mounted replica machine gun, a possible violation of a presidential decree issued way back during martial law.

PNP Director General Jesus Verzosa yesterday ordered Camp Crame's Civil Security Group (CSG) to "dig deeper" into the circumstances surrounding a March 3 photograph that showed Estrada and Binay aboard a vintage jeep during a motorcade in Carmen, Cebu.

The photo appeared on the front page of a newspaper earlier this month.

"This looks very much like another case of harassment by the administration," Estrada's spokesperson Margaux Salcedo said.

ERAP UNDER A-9

Villar: GMA's sons behind con-ass mode

By Michael Lim Ubac and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

A MOVE IN THE HOUSE OF Representatives to amend the Constitution and bypass the Senate in the process is only 20 votes shy of the required number, indicating a plan to set aside next year's balloting remains alive, Sen. Manuel Villar said yesterday.

Villar was referring to the resolution drafted by Cosmetics Sec Rep. Luis Villafuerte, president of President Macapagal-Arroyo's party the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino, seeking to convene Congress into a constituent assembly (Con-ass) to amend the 1987 Constitution.

"They will continuously try and get all the numbers," Villar said in an interview with the Inquirer a day after President Arroyo signed into law a bill providing P51.5 billion for the full automation of the 2010 elections.

Villar said the drive in Congress to abolish the presidential system and give way to a parliamentary or federal system was being pushed by Ms Arroyo's two sons in Congress—Mikey and Dato.

Asked if the President was involved, Villar said: "I don't think she will object

CHA-CHA, A10

Palace: Not true we ignore media killings

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY criticized as "unfair" a report from a New York-based media watchdog listing the Philippines as among the world's most dangerous places for journalists due to many unresolved murders since 1986.

At least 24 killings of Filipino journalists have remained unresolved since 1986, said the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). The CPJ called on the government to prosecute and punish those behind the murders.

In its latest "Impunity Index" report, the CPJ ranked the

PALACE A4

Panlilio 2010 run doesn't worry Palace

By TJ Burgonio

STO. TOMAS, PANGASINAN—The movement to field Pampanga Gov. Eddie "Among Ed" Panlilio as a presidential candidate next year doesn't worry Malacañang and the administration coalition.

"We respect the calls for Governor Panlilio to join the 2010 presidential contest. It doesn't bother the administration even

PANLILIO A4

Pacquiao cornered by ABS-CBN, GMA 7, Solar

OUT Third baseman Mike Wagner of Bangkok bangs on to the infield relay and beats Gabe Reyes of Manila-1 on the bag during the South East Asian Youth Baseball tournament yesterday at the Aimee grounds. Manila-1 defeated Bangkok, 6-5, to keep its hopes of advancing past the preliminary round. (See story on Page A13.)

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

NOW, IT'S PACMAN VS KAparatilyo.

Even before he could slug it out with Britain's Ricky Hatton in the boxing ring, Manny Pacquiao has to battle it out with ABS-CBN.

ABS-CBN News and Current Affairs took exception to Pacquiao's remarks at the March 23 press conference.

"We are surprised by Pacquiao's statement that ABS-CBN broke a supposed embargo," ABS-CBN News said in a statement released yesterday.

ABS-CBN News said "we respond because [Pacquiao's]

PACQUIAO A6

Pareño makes dramatic dash from ladies room

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Entertainment

ACTRESS GINA PAREÑO MADE a dramatic entrance at the 3rd Asian Film Awards—the region's answer to the Oscars—held on Monday night at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center.

According to two members of the Philippine delegation, when Pareño's name was called as Best Supporting Actress winner for her work in "Serbis," she was nowhere to be found.

"Serbis" director Dante Mendoza, a nominee for Best Director, went up the stage to accept Pareño's trophy; scriptwriter Senedy Que recalled in an e-mail to the Inquirer. As Dante began to speak, Que wrote, Gina was suddenly sighted running toward the stage.

"I'm sorry, I was in the ladies room," were the actress' first words, delivered breathlessly, from the podium, Jurel Yumol of the Animation Council of the Philippines said in a text message.

Disarmed, the audience laughed, and then applauded, both Yumol and Que related.

PAREÑO A8

ASIAN OSCAR La Gina Pareño who delivers a breathless acceptance speech, the 3rd Asian Film Award's longest.

'Nicole' didn't recant, groups assert

By Norman Bordadora and Tarra Quismundo

A NUMBER OF GROUPS AND individuals yesterday asked the Supreme Court to look into the recent sworn statement of a Filipina woman casting doubt on her earlier complaint that resulted in the December 2006 rape conviction of a US Marine.

Women's rights advocates and members of the party-list group Gabriela and the Regina Alparaque Mahakeyan (Bayan) claimed that "Nicole" did not recant, as the media had reported, and that there was no inconsistency between her sworn statement dated March 12, 2009, and submitted to the Court of Appeals by the lawyers of Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, and

NICOLE A6

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Metro Manila	Partly cloudy	Subic/Clark	Partly cloudy
Baguio	Partly cloudy	Batanes	Partly cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly cloudy	Cubi	Partly cloudy
Laoag	Partly cloudy	Tacloban	Partly cloudy
Cloark Aero	Partly cloudy	Aux. Airbase	Partly cloudy
Legazpi	Partly cloudy	Catarman	Partly cloudy
Catarman	Partly cloudy	Legazpi Aux Air	Partly cloudy
Tacloban	Partly cloudy	Basco	Partly cloudy

EZ2* 15 21 — 3 5

SUERTRES* 8 6 8 — 5 2 4 — 1 0 4

SIX DIGIT* 8 7 4 1 7 4

6/42 LUZ-VIS-MIN 1 4 9 14 28 41 — P3,763,980.00

SUPERLOTTO 6/49 4 19 28 29 36 41 — P16,000,000.00

'We don't need Tony Blair'

NORTH COTABATO'S PROVINCIAL BOARD YESterday asked President Macapagal-Arroyo to reject the idea of inviting former British Prime Minister Tony Blair as an adviser in the Mindanao peace talks.

The conflict in the South is a purely internal issue that can be solved through dialogue among the stakeholders, said Gov. Emmylou J. Taliño-Mendoza.

Following a speech from Piñol, titled "Thank You, Mr. Tony Blair, But No Thanks!" the provincial board yesterday passed a resolution asking the President to drop the idea of involving foreign intervenors in the peace process.

The government panel negotiating a peace agreement with the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front earlier suggested that an eminent persons group be created to advise the peace process, to include Blair and former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan.

The suggestion was taken up by Mohagaring (which means) a statement the other day following a meeting between the President and the ranking Moro, saying that Blair's "charisma and charm that brought peace to Northern Ireland may be needed to put an end to the conflict in the Southern Philippines."

"The statement that Blair's charm and charisma could end the trouble in the South is a perfect example of the jaundiced perspective of our policy makers and peace negotiators of the true issues and root of the problem in Mindanao and the solutions that could bring an end to the conflict," said a resolution from the 14-man provincial board.

"Signing a peace agreement with the MILF will not end the problem but addressing the roots of the problem that led to the birth of groups like the MNLF and the MILF will bring us true and lasting peace," it said.

Piñol said the conflict in the South is a result of "deep-seated biases and prejudices between Christians and Muslims which can be healed through education, the failure of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to function, massive corruption in the region, absence of justice and the failure of government to address growing deprivation, the lack of opportunities and hopelessness."

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino (Pimentel Jr. meanwhile said he did not believe Blair, who is now a Middle East peace envoy, would be of much help as the Mindanao conflict was not his field of expertise.

He said Blair should think twice about "inserting himself" if he agrees to help conduct the Mindanao peace talks. With Christine Avendaño

GE Appliances

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A la JFK, GMA calls for Pinoy volunteerism

By TJ Burgonio

STO. TOMAS, BATANGAS—EVOKING US President John F. Kennedy's famous exhortation, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday asked Filipinos to practice "volunteerism" and community work as the global economic downturn cuts across Asia and closer to home.

"Not famously said, 'Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country,'" the President said in an interview with the state-run Radyo ng Bayan.

Mr Arroyo, who presided at a Cabinet meeting at the rest house of Assistant Secretary Antonio Villar here, said difficult economic times call for a new age of volunteerism and community spirit.

She said government, civic-religious groups and non-government organizations should "harness the people" to engage in coordinated volunteer activities.

"We can focus on initiatives such as cleaning up the environment, creating parks, planting trees, and then let us bring vaccine to the poor," she said.

"Let's have food banks. Let's set aside food, for instance, from restaurants. We can contribute this to the poor. Then let's teach the old how to read. There are just countless doing these trying times," she added.

It calls for all Filipinos "pulling in one direction," Ms Arroyo said.

"We should volunteer our time, our skill, our resources. This is a noble undertaking that we should all take seriously" she said.

The recession has slowed exports, forced companies abroad to cut down on operations and shed jobs, displacing more than 41,800 Filipino workers here and abroad.

Solon softens on tax on text

By Gil C. Cabacungan

CONGRESS HAS LOWERED TO FIVE CENTAVOS its proposed fee on text messages and mobile phone calls but says the 'level-playing measure to be implemented starting next month.

Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez said the House oversight committee has softened on its initial 10-centavo planned tax fee as it believed the 5 centavos charge per text or call would be enough to bankroll the construction of well-ventilated computer centers for public elementary and high schools with a student population of more than 500.

Suarez estimated the measure to raise as much as P64 billion in additional revenues a year with mobile phone providers likely to shoulder half of the extra cost and pass on the other half to their subscribers.

Following a meeting by the oversight committee, Suarez said members agreed that the text and toll fee could be imposed even without legislation.

He said the House would draft the proposed implementing rules and regulations after the National Telecommunications Commission to implement the five-centavo fee for the use of the broadband spectrum.

TXTinBOX WINNING NUMBERS FOR MARCH 30, 2009 57 54 28 15 09 JACKPOT: P10,207,320.80

Why ANGEL LOCSIN is Taking It All Off

She's been constantly hounded by it, and it's keeping the rest of the model from seeing the true extraordinary of her skin, so cleaning and TV beauty Angel Locsin is taking it off off! Her unwanted hair, that is. As the newest endorser of **Facial Care Centre's LaserLight** hair removal, she is the perfect embodiment of the modern, active, sexy woman who still proudly flaunts those dark tracks of hair obsessive to conventional hair removal methods.

Angel herself used to practice those old ways of removing unwanted hair. "I used to shave, but I really regret it because you get ingrown hair," she shares. "The hair becomes coarse so I'd get conscious about it. Like if I'm sitting, not in sleeveless and maikli' pero legs ko, they might feel the stubble! I also tried those depilatory creams, pero mahilo naman ang ingredients. The hair becomes coarse also. I used to get chicken skin, rashes and irritations from those ways of removing hair."

LaserLight hair removal uses a painless method of emitting pulses of light energy that are absorbed by the pigment of hair. This zaps the hair root and kills it, preventing the growth of new hair. This means no more unwanted hairs after 6 to 8 sessions! LaserLight can be done on the underarms, arms, legs, upper lip and bikini area, or virtually anywhere you have unwanted hair. It is also safe and suitable for all skin types, from very fair to very dark, as well as all hair types, from very fine to very coarse.

Angel confesses she wasn't so excited to try LaserLight at first. "I've heard a lot of stories about laser hair removal, na painful daw, and others even experienced bad effects. So I was afraid to take the risk. Then a friend of mine told me about LaserLight, and she said I should try it. Nag-aagree rin ako when she told me about the treatment, that it wasn't painful and that it was very safe. I was also really impressed with Facial Care Centre," she adds. "What I've noticed about Facial Care is they really take care of you. Hindi lang basta-basta pagkatapos ng treatments. They examine your skin first, ask kung meron skin problems ba... so they can give what you only need. That shows they really know what they're doing. And at Facial Care, it's really clean. Particular kasi ako doon, because it's the skin diba? I'm treating! And everyone has their own room, so my privacy. Hindi magsisiksikan. Everyone feels pampered there."

And how was her first LaserLight experience? "It was not painful at all! I was surprised that I fell asleep during the procedure! And I so think I have a very low pain threshold. In fact, when I go to the dentist nagpapa-IV anesthesia pa ako," she laughs admirably. "But I was really very happy with LaserLight – no pain, no downtime, no need for anesthesia! Plus, it's also great for sensitive areas like mine! No redness or irritation! I did it on my underarms, legs and I tried it on my bikini area. Parehi siya on any body part that you want to be hair-free!"

Though she still hasn't completed her entire LaserLight programme, Angel is already very satisfied with the results of her initial treatments. "With LaserLight, I noticed that even after just the first session, my legs hair was unnoticeable. And when the hair grows back, it's finer and most of them just fall off. That means slowed-in yung rate permanently nabalik sana! I grew back underarm hair my first session, I was so excited to do the treatment again. Excited ako maging completely hair-free! I also noticed that the skin on my underarms, legs and bikini lines where I had the LaserLight treatment got smoother, mas malinis talaga."

Apart from what being hair-free has done for her, "I think because of this, I'm not only happier and more confident. There were times when I would be at a pictorial or taping and I'd notice, 'Oh no... kulingan in may-skin...'. So I'd look for a tweezer, a razor or someone who knows how to do threading, 'cause I wouldn't feel at ease knowing there might be unsightly hair peeking out! But usually with threading, sin certain yung stares, and it's painful! At least now, wala akong problema. Since yung skin ko is also better now after LaserLight, I believe I'll also be able to get more projects, endorsements, and even more time to do more work! And I won't have to worry about removing my unwanted hair anymore, or magpunta! to any time to to do other things. It's here to stay! But aside me to wear shorts, I can do it! I can raise my arms anytime too! I'm looking forward to having whiter and perfectly nice underarms and more LaserLight really suits my lifestyle too! Just aside from being busy with work, I'm also very athletic. Now, I won't need to worry about hair removal. I'll have to wear a swimsuit or a sporty outfit for life is more hassle-free and I feel more carefree. I've got nothing to hide! Women should really try LaserLight!"

Isn't it time you take it all off too? Like Angel, go for an experience of freedom from all those unwanted hair hassles! Get smooth, sexy hair-free skin easily, painlessly and permanently with LaserLight hair removal. *Call Facial Care Centre for a free consultation at 892-SKIN (7546). Cebu (233-7600/233-8181 and Pampanga (981-3404/98).*

Gordon, Palace kiss and make up on hostages

By Christine F. Esguerra

ZITA TUMAL, PANGASINAN... Malacañang yesterday announced that Sen. Richard Gordon had agreed to bury the hatchet and work more closely with key government officials to ensure efforts to secure the release of three International Red Cross workers being held by the Islamic extremist group Abu Sayyaf in Jolo.

Press Secretary Cerge Remonde said the agreement came during a meeting on Monday involving Gordon, Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro and Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno on Monday, four days after talks with the rebels broke down.

"I'm happy to report that they talked and agreed to work as one," Remonde told reporters in a hastily-called briefing.

Late last week, Gordon, who chairs the Philippine National Red Cross, threw ill-advised support behind Mrs. Gen. Jeanette Sabban of bungling the senator's attempts to get at least one of the hostages released by "unnecessarily provoking" an armed clash last week, days by prematurely withdrawing his troops.

Sabban denied Gordon's charges but the military has since sent him on a two-week education tour in the United States.

"Sec. Gordon, Teodoro and Puno] agreed to have better and greater coordination to avoid misunderstanding," Remonde said.

The three Red Cross workers—Italian Eugenio Vagni, Swiss Andreas Notter and Filipina Mary Jean Lacaba—were snatched by the armed group in Jolo on Jan. 15.

Remonde yesterday maintained that the government was "doing everything right" in ensuring the safe release of the hostages.

"The government is doing everything by the book and in accordance with internationally accepted, proven and tested principles in dealing with double situations," he said.

"We are on top of the situation regardless of what has been said."

Consistent with administration policy, the local crisis committee would be the main negotiator with the three-level Romonde said.

Meanwhile, a military spokesperson, in a separate press briefing, said soldiers would continue to conduct a cursory area of Jolo but would put off pursuit operations to give way to negotiations.

"We are holding our previous position because we would like to give way to negotiations to free the hostages," Lt. Col. Edgard Arevalo told reporters.

Arevalo revealed that the military was also limiting food, water and other supplies to the rebels.

"The modern principle of war is inclusability. We're only trying to starve them down by preventing reinforcements and resupply. We're keeping up the pressure without forcing to resort to offensive actions," he told reporters in separate interviews.

The Abu Sayyaf, a small Islamist group with ties to regional terror network Jemaah Islamiyah, had threatened to behead one of the hostages in case military pressure after a firefight erupted last week, killing three soldiers and wounding 19 others. At least two Abu Sayyaf fighters were also reportedly killed.

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PULL OUT, OR ELSE...

Abus threaten to behead a hostage

By Jeliya dela Cruz
Correspondent

DESPITE THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE military last week, the Abu Sayyaf group has reportedly given the government one week, beginning Monday (March 23), to implement a military pullout and start negotiating—or they will behead one of the three International Red Cross captives.

In a telephone interview yesterday morning, Abu Sayyaf leader Albader Parad told this reporter that the new ultimatum is for the "serious implementation of a military pull-out" as soon as they reclaimed to their lairs safer base, Pahlawi Gordon, namely, based in Patikul and Talipao in Sulu.

If they don't act, the group is willing to release one hostage to signal their seriousness in the said Gordon, head of the Philippine National Red Cross.

If this demand is not met within the time frame, Parad said he would be left with no choice but to make good on his threat to behead one of the hostages.

The hostages, all workers of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)—Italian national Eugenio Vagni, Swiss national Andreas Notter and Filipina Mary Jean Lacaba—were seized by the group in Jolo on Jan. 15. Today is their 69th day in captivity.

Parad said he has informed Gordon about the decision of their group.

"Kung inag pull out namon dire sa amon sa atsadi namin, kabit tanong, bay Gordon o kabit kamong tawag dire, ibigay namin ang isa. Hindi ako nagbibiro sa aking sinasabi. Ang pero kung ayaw pa rin nila, ang ibibigay ang ultimatum kung inagang mag pull-out a week pero nagkatotohanan kami. Ang nagyari dahil sa amon na may pakamatay akong isa, natuman na," he said.

(If the military pulls out of the areas we specified, we will release one of the hostages to Gordon or to any one government official. I have not bullshitted on what I presented this morning, but for the third time around. I'm serious. But if they still do not pull out to our unilateral call, other Our government's agreement ... it will be followed), Parad said.

According of one police intelligence source, the encounter with the military on March 16 resulted in the death of two of the key members of the group's ruling council, Jalhardi Abmusah, a member of Ajanbar leading members, Radullan Sahiron Sarabal Abu.

The intelligence source believes the death of Jalmusah may have been the basis for the threat to decapitate one of the ICRC hostages.

Jalmusa, who commands one of the biggest MILF contingents in the Pitlad area, was reported by sources to have been only angry Bill the Abu Sayyaf wanted, also known as the late, Ilo Hasan or Council of the Al Mandalad Al Islamiyah (Abul), reminded upon Sabbing, and decided to allow Parad to continue talks with Gordon.

The bargain are the release of one hostage in exchange for a military pull-out to certain areas and the start of negotiations.

According to the source, Jalmusa demanded a deadline. He reportedly told Parad to "expedite the release of the hostages through the immediate pullout of negotiators or behead the hostages if the government refuses to take positive action over the negotiations."

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, March 25, 2009
Annunciation

1st Reading: Is 7: 10-14; 8: 10
2nd Reading: Heb 10: 4-10
Gospel: Lk 1:26-38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, To one sent to a young virgin who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the family of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

The angel came to her and said, "Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you." Mary was troubled at these words, wondering what this greeting could mean.

But the angel said, "Do not fear, Mary, for God has looked kindly on you. You shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call him Jesus." He will be great and shall called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the kingdom of David, his ancestor; he will reign over the people of Jacob forever and his reign shall have no end."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be if I am a virgin?" and the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the holy child to be born will be called Son of God. Even your relative Elizabeth in expecting a son in her old age, although she was unable to, have a child; and she is now in her sixth month. With God nothing is impossible."

Then Mary said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word." And the angel left her.

Commentary

The annunciation story is a story of virginal beauty and wonder. Mary was a poor peasant girl, in one place village, she would have been illiterate, her knowledge of the scriptures limited to what she heard in the synagogue and perhaps a few scrolls in her home. But Mary was also only a mere cog of all in the Divine, ever to the one chosen who is not chosen to carry and nurse to God's son. For that reason alone, we call her blessed!

She is a truly remarkable person. Young and unsophisticated as she was, Mary was reflective and meditative. She knew the spiritual power of contemplation. She need only the music of praise and profound quiet after this event for her, and what it would signify for her. In our hectic, non-contemplative age, Mary's example for quiet reflection calls us. When we take the time to contemplate upon the word of God will experience the birth of Christ in their lives. We must, therefore, all agree that Mary is the most blessed of women, and that "Blessed Virgin Mary" is a fitting designation for her. Amen.

Clarissa Corpuz/Communications Foundation, Inc. / Philippine Bible Society
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Ebdane names successor of slain official

PUBLIC WORKS SECRETARY HERMOGENES Ebdane Jr. yesterday named a successor to slain Undersecretary for Luzon Operations Rustom Aquino, who died on Thursday after being ambushed by gunmen in Manila on March 11.

Ebdane, in a statement, said that undersecretary-in-charge Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) projects and operations in the south, namely Undersecretary for Mindanao Operations Romeo Montes would serve as his (Ebdane's) chief of staff.

Ebdane announced the appointment at the inauguration the other day of the four-Mile-an-Asian Bridge in Pampanga.

"The death of Undersecretary Aquino is a big loss to the department. He was one fellow who actually sacrificed his family for the sake of his work," Ebdane said.

Undersecretary for Support Services Rafael Fernandez will take over Montes's duty-station from Montes.

Fernandez's post, meanwhile, will be taken over temporarily by Assistant Secretary for Support Services Janice Fuccanan. Arvenia Ing

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Corrections

IN THE MARCH 20 ISSUE, a front-page caption misspelled the surname of Bobby Dinoy's driver. He is Manuel Gobles—not Gobeia.

* * *

IN THE MARCH 22 ISSUE, a headline on Page A6 misspelled the name of an author in an article. The headline should have read—"World leaders welcome Geithner reveal"—not "Kamikaze rally sets Geithner record."

* * *

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a fact box on Page F4 of the Learning section—"Ateneo Master"—misspelled the name of a school. The school's name is St. Paul College—not St. Paul's College.

* * *

IN THE MARCH 24 ISSUE, a front-page photo of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair wrestling a La Salle Green Archer jacket was erroneously attributed to Inquirer photographer Kelly Lucas. The photo was contributed by Cinapalgun is Cuya.

American con man in $2-M Medicare scam deported

By Jerome Aning

THE BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION (BI) DEported an American fugitive wanted for perpetrating a scam that defrauded America's Medicare program of more than $2 million (about P96 million).

Jerome Howard Feldman, 57, was deported on March 18 aboard a Continental Airlines flight that brought him to Guam en route to the US mainland, Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan said in a statement yesterday.

Libanan said the immigration board of commissioners approved Feldman's deportation on March 6 for being an "undesirable, convicted and undesirable alien."

"There will be no letup in our campaign against foreign fugitives as long as they use the Philippines as a refuge to evade prosecution and punishment for crimes they committed in their homeland," he said.

BI records showed that immigration police arrested Feldman on Feb. 3 at the Makati Medical Center where he had gone for a medical checkup.

The US indictment in Miami, which sought his arrest, said Feldman was to stand trial before a US District Court in Florida where he was charged with "knowingly and willfully executing a scheme or artifice to defraud the Medicare and Medicaid programs."

The embassy said Feldman, a licensed and practicing psychiatrist in Florida, was also associated with a website that allegedly is involved in human organ transplants in the Philippines and elsewhere.

According to Libanan, Feldman was already an undocumented alien at the time he was arrested as the US passport had expired in October last year. (Libanan said)

Libanan said Feldman has been on the wanted list of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) since 1999.

The FBI said the fugitive initially fled to Thailand and stayed there for two years before moving to the Philippines in 2002.

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2 solons question traffic fines hike

By Lolo B. Sakaaria

MOTORISTS BEware. The traffic ticket you thought would cost you a small sum last got more expensive.

This has prompted two congressmen to urge their colleagues to investigate the enforcement of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) order raising traffic violation fines by up to 8,000 percent, purportedly without public consultation.

Parañaque Rep. Roilo Golbuena Jr. Representative Jonvic Remulla and Teodoro Casiño filed a resolution calling for a House probe of the DOTC order that has caught transport groups and the public by surprise.

Issued in 2008

The order, issued in August 2008, raises the fines and penalties for traffic and administrative violations imposed by the Land Transportation Office on erring drivers, conductors and operators of motor vehicles.

The rate of increase ranged from 11 percent to 8,000 percent. The fine for a plate number violation, for instance, was raised from P450 to P500. The biggest increase was for the illegal use of a bell, siren or cabinet siren—from P100 to P15,000.

Fines were also raised for violation of traffic rules; license, markings, paint and protection franchise fraud and falsifying and civil and incorporations.

"DOTC Order No. 2008-09 will negatively impact on the lives and earnings of drivers, operators and conductors of jeepneys, buses, taxis, FX taxis, trucks, tricycles, and practically every motor vehicle user in the country who are suffering the brunt of the ongoing economic downturn," the joint resolution said.

They said the public transport sector was already heavily taxed with the repealed value-added tax, road user tax and quarterly and yearly taxes.

The two said the DOTC order was "clearly undemocratic and lawmaker."

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BIR taps Pacquiao to do tax commercial

By Raoul W. Dongio

FACED WITH A REVENUE shortfall in the first two months of the year, the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) has tapped boxing hero Manny Pacquiao for a 30-second television commercial to be launched today to remind people to pay their taxes.

BIR Commissioner Jose S. Espiritu III and Finance Secretary Margarito B. Teves also appear in the TV ad.

While the TV ad will be launched today, the start of its airing on TV networks may take a little longer because air time is expensive and the BIR is short of funds, Espiritu said.

The ad is meant to kick off this year's BIR campaign for the tax season.

Last month, Teves announced that the government had revised yet again the budget deficit for this year, setting it at P177.2 billion on account of a stimulus program that seeks to spend hundreds of billions of pesos on infrastructure and social services.

P102-B deficit

Malacañang first pegged the deficit at P43 billion but increased it to P132 billion in the effects of the global financial crisis worsened.

After speaking at a tax seminar at the Sun Shield Resort, Mount Hotel in Makati, Espiritu said the BIR was hard-pressed to improve collection especially after suffering a P2-billion shortfall in the first two months of the year.

The BIR's target for January and February was almost P100 billion, while the target for the first quarter was P160 billion.

The BIR chief appealed to taxpayers to pay the right amount, saying their participation is responsible citizens was key in achieving the government's revenue projects.

Bagging

"You can stay home bagging you to see forget your duties as citizens of the Philippines," Espiritu told those who attended the seminar organized by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Pacquiao himself went to the BIR headquarters in Diliman, Quezon City, on Jan. 23 to personally file his 2008 income tax return (ITR). He paid the tax due to the presence of Espiritu.

Pacquiao's initiative of filing so early led to a pledge to make himself a more visible example of a good taxpayer, which led to the production of the ad.

Espiritu urged taxpayers to file their taxes before the deadline and pay the correct taxes at authorized banks to avoid the rush on April 15.

Banks open on April 4

No said banks would be open only on one Saturday, April 4, to accommodate taxpayers before the deadline because the second week of the month is Holy Week.

Revenue district offices will be setting up filing centers in selected places all over the country to help taxpayers to file their ITRs, the BIR chief said.

Espiritu said the BIR would soon issue implementing guidelines for other acceptable modes of payment that the bureau would adopt to ease the payment process.

IN THIS CORNER Even before doing the rounds with Britain's Ricky Hatton (left), Pacquiao finds himself in a corner between two giant TV networks. Let's get ready to rumble. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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Pacquiao cornered by ABS-CBN, GMA 7, Solar

From page A1

charge station at one care valmen as a news organization," Roxas reporting and respect for our enemies."

At the arbitration conference on March 23, Pacquiao, who was calling from Los Angeles, California, said that ABS-CBN prematurely aired a video on his planned transfer to the network.

Pacquiao told the press that the video was meant to be unbanged until he had confirmed whether there was a "breach" of his contract with Solar Sports.

Solar Sports has a blockbuster deal with GMA 7, which will air Pacquiao's fights on May 2 (May 3 in Manila) with Hatton in Las Vegas.

GMA 7 is the favored rival of ABS-CBN and Pacquiao's decision to transfer to the latter highlighted the long-running network war.

2 statements on record

The ABS-CBN statement then recalled a series of events behind the aborted transfer. "On March 14, Pacquiao executed a statement that he asked to be embargoed. That statement has never been aired."

Three days later, Pacquiao "executed another statement saying that he came to ABS-CBN to air his next fights. He later approved that statement for airing, and our newscasts aired it on March 18," ABS-CBN News said.

The following day Pacquiao granted an interview which ABS-CBN News in which "he asked viewers to support him and watch his fight on ABS-CBN."

On March 20, in an interview with ABS-CBN News, he reiterated this point: "My decision [is] still the same. Mapapanood ang fight sa ABS-CBN (The fight will be seen on ABS-CBN)," he said.

Then he changed his mind.

Kapuso

At the press conference organized by Solar Sports and GMA 7 on Monday, Pacquiao announced that he wasn't severing his ties with Solar Sports and that the Heroes fight would still be aired in the Philippines by GMA 7.

GMA officials yesterday asserted that "Pacquiao made the right decision by honoring his contract with Solar Sports and more importantly, by remaining a Kapuso [a GMA 7 talent]."

In a statement, GMA described Pacquiao's pronouncements about ABS-CBN as "bold."

Courage

Felipe L. Gozon, GMA Network chair, expressed his admiration for Pacquiao because of his "courage to admit his faults."

"It shows character for a man, particularly a world champion ... to admit and ask forgiveness for [his] mistake. It took a lot of courage to admit one's ... errors if it doesn't, so, many times may hurt him," Gozon, who is also GMA president and chief executive officer, said in the statement.

At the press conference on Monday, Pacquiao claimed that the controversy didn't distract him from his training.

Focus on fight

Gozon acknowledged that Pacquiao should focus on his fight with Hatton. "We only want what is best for Manny and we wish him success in his fight against Hatton. His fight is not only for him and his family, but for the entire country as well. He should now train hard and focus on his preparations for the fight."

During the quarterly "Chat with Chairman," a chat ABS-CBN officers held openly to "encourage employees to speak," Lopez III, the network's chair and president, said: "Let's support Manny Pacquiao, and let's wish him well."

Lopez said that it was Pacquiao who had approached ABS-CBN and that the network didn't violate any of their principles.

ABS-CBN News also said it chose to put an end to the imbroglio. "Regardless, we can refuse to report on Pacquiao's activities and respect his decision to move into any arrangement with any company regarding his fights," it said in its statement.

Interview request declined

In the March 23 episode of "TV Patrol," however, Pacquiao was shown declining an interview request from ABS-CBN News reporter Chan Castillejo.

Solar Sports denied that it has barred ABS-CBN from covering Pacquiao's training at the Wildcard Gym in Los Angeles.

"I think Manny's intentions in (to all) press [people] to basically give him some space to give him some support," said Dyan Chan Liong, chief operating officer of Solar Sports.

Distracted

Chan Liong said the issue distracted the team from their training.

"I think he wants to concentrate. We have a job to do. There's an instruction to basically shield Manny from the press from all of this," the Solar Sports official said.

Pacquiao skipped running over the weekend to settle the dispute over the television rights of his megabuck bout with Hatton.

"We'd like to concentrate on promoting his fights," Chan Liong said. "I think that's the most important thing, particularly if he wins, there's possibly [Floyd Jr.] Mayweather and that's even a bigger event." With a report from Jamecia B. Pape

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Palace: Not true we ignore media ...

From page A1

Philippines No. 6 in a list of 14 countries with high numbers of unresolved killings of journalists, against the size of the population.

Tarcisio Secretary Ed. ardo Ermita said it was not true the government had ignored these killings in the country, saying 26 of 31 cases were now solved, thus being tried in lower courts or under prosecutorial review.

"We vehemently disagree with the manner the Philippines is once again put in a bad light on its commitments on the promotion and protection of human rights," Ermita told reporters.

"The allegation by the CPJ is an unfair depiction of what is happening based on assessments that are inadequate. These issues have all been properly attended to."

No quick convictions

The retired military general said at least four people had been convicted and 26 others were facing charges for the murder of at least 31 Filipino journalists since 2001.

"The low conviction rate has been misrepresented as a slack in the country's justice system. This is a misconception because we always condemn to the rule of law. The government will not front quick convictions simply for the sake of announcing achievements," Ermita said.

The CPJ said it was standing firm on its "impunity index" because the data based report "belies the claim of no exaggeration."

RP peacetime democracy

"What is striking is that the Philippines is one of the only countries in the top half of this list that is a viable and a peacetime democracy," the CPJ said.

Iraq, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sri Lanka remained at the top of the list, but three states are currently in a state of war, the CPJ added.

Local media groups said about 78 to 160 of more than 120 journalists killed since 1986 died while doing their job. Only five of those cases led to the conviction of gunmen—but not to any allegged masterminds.

ERMITA: Government not ignoring killings

In a statement yesterday, a mission from the Bangkok-based Southeast Asian Press Alliance (Seapa) that visited the country on March 21-24 expressed fears that the killings of media people in the Philippines could spread to other countries in the region.

Deeply rooted

"We believe that the culture of impunity that is deeply rooted in the Philippines could be replicated to other countries in the region unless there is a conscious effort to dismantle it in the Philippines," the group said.

Seapa noted an increase in violence against journalists and media workers in Malaysia and Thailand last year. This includes harassment, such attacks on journalists and media premises, killings and legal sanctions to suppress free expression.

The alliance also framed as escalation of the killings of media people in the Philippines since the 2007 elections.

Seapa called on President Macapagal-Arroyo "to take the steps necessary to prevent that unfortunate development." With reports from Alcuin Papa and Reuters

CHARGES PILING UP

Legacy owner faces another syndicated estafa rap

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE ANTI-GRAFT BUREAU OF THE PHILIPPINE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (DOJ) has filed another case of syndicated estafa against Celso de los Angeles and other officers of the bankrupt Legacy Group.

The case, involving the P500-million in deposits allegedly stolen from the Rural Bank of Bulacan Negros Oriental, is the third syndicated estafa case to be filed against De los Angeles, the company's owner, and its officers.

It is clear that respondents, in conspiracy with one another, acted as a mob of swindling syndicate that launched, orchestrated, established and perpetrated a systematic and grand series of misappropriations, conversions and siphoning of funds derived from the general public," the BSP said in a statement.

Syndicated estafa being a nonbailable offense once the Department of Justice finds merit in the cases filed by the BSP, De los Angeles and the other respondents would go to jail.

According to the complaint, the Rural Bank of Bulacan had total deposits of P594 million as of end-September 2008, but it was found that hundreds of millions of those deposits had been lost.

The BSP estimated the "stolen" deposits at P500 million.

The latest syndicated estafa case was the fifth in a series of charges that the BSP brought against the Legacy Group.

The first two cases, filed on Jan. 5 and Feb. 5, involved falsification of public documents against officers of Legacy-owned banks.

The BSP said the Legacy banks' officers invested and appointed Bridgeton Trust, which were supported by fake business registrations and manufactured documents, and diverted the proceeds for personal use.

The first of the three syndicated estafa cases, filed on Feb. 25, involved P650 million in allegedly stolen deposits from the Rural Bank of Dipilog, which has branches in General Santos and Cebu cities.

The second syndicated estafa case, filed last March 6, involved P487 million worth of funds allegedly siphoned off from the Rizal Commercial Bank in Leyte.

Besides rural banks, Legacy Group also owns pioneer companies which also underwent liquidity problems and were ordered closed by regulators.

Since December, the BSP has ordered the closure of 12 Legacy-owned rural banks, which it found to engaged in unsafe and unsound banking practices.

According to initial estimates, the deposits in the Legacy banks that the cross-owned guarantee company, the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp., must settle amount to P545 billion.

Alabang Boys' nemesis goes on vacation

CITING THE NEED FOR "DELIBERATE" [illegible], Maj. Ferdinand Marcelino of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) said on Monday he was taking a leave of absence to allow for an unbiased administrative investigation of himself to ordered by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Marcelino was the lead operative in the "Alabang Boys" drugs case, so-called because the three men arrested...Richard Brodett, Jorge Joseph and Joseph Ibrahim...are scions of wealthy families, two of which live in the exclusive Ayala-Alabang Village in Muntinlupa City.

The President ordered Marcelino investigated for the release of Patrick el Khoury, who was allegedly driving for Joseph at the time of the drug bust in September last year.

Mr. Arroyo also ordered the prosecutors and other [illegible] of Justice (DOJ) officials investigated after Marcelino alleged they received a multimillion-peso bribe to recommend the dismissal of drug charges against the three suspects.

They never also ordered to take a leave by the President while an investigation was ongoing.

In her investigation order issued after a meeting with the agencies involved in the [illegible] campaign in Malacañang on Thursday, Mrs. Arroyo questioned Marcelino's decision to release Khoury, saying he had acted like a "prosecutor."

"I am confident my name will be cleared [illegible] Khoury. He is innocent and he was not one of my targets, even the National Bureau of Investigation questioned him and found him innocent," Marcelino said in an interview in his office.

Marcelino said he saw vindication in the President's order to the DOJ to file drug cases against the Alabang Boys.

He also called on Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez to take his own leave of absence.

"I challenge him to file a leave of absence too following the President's order on the Alabang Boys. We all want good governance, accountability and transparency and I challenge the secretary to prove to the public that he, too, is accountable for the actions of those under him," Marcelino said. Ariyo Arka Cruz, Contributor

'Nicole didn't recant,' groups say, seek SC ruling

Front page A1

her testimony that led to the lawyer's rape conviction.

They also asked the high court to look into a leaked draft decision, recently published in the Manila Times, reversing Smith's conviction.

Justice Agustin Dizon's draft decision has no bearing on the case as he has retired and it was not promulgated by his division.

Smith's appeal has since been raffled off to the 11th Division of the Court of Appeals.

The petitioners asked the Supreme Court to stop the appellate court from resolving Smith's appeal pending the result of the investigation they, even seeking. They said Nicole's recent statements and the leaked draft decision could unduly influence both the appellate court and the public.

MOTHER TO THE DEFENSE Tatan Nicolas-Fransen, Nicole's mother, claims it was her idea for Nicole to sign the affidavit, and defends her from reprimanding the once convicted alleging her daughter

JOAN ORAL/INQUIRER PHOTOGRAPHER

WET TO DO Youth groups protesting the Visiting Forces Agreement rally as close as they can get to the US Embassy—which is not close—as they are met by anti-riot cops/cars minutes after they parted.

MIKE ALQUINTO

Petitioners

Among the petitioners are Leticia Ramos-Shahani, one of the authors of the Anti-Rape Law of 1997; women and child-abuse rights activist Ai Mary John Mananzan; Toyota engineer, Ana Maria Memoracion; and Cristina Lim Pastor and lawyers Henry Kasper and Evalyn Ursua. Nicole's former legal counsel.

The other petitioners are Ateneo Defenders of the Constitution fellowship members and Supreme Justices of the Task Force Isabelo Magalong. A coalition of women's groups "that engage in various forms of advocacy to obtain justice for Nicole."

'Orchestrated'

But Nicole's mother called on Ums and like-minded groups and individuals to stop rehashing action on the case.

The mother understood that Nicole had issued the affidavit on her own volition and on the family's "instigation."

The mother demanded to know why Ums was "taking no investigation when we were the ones who approached Nicole's lawyers] so we can get the P5 000 000 court-awarded civil damages] intended for us."

"What does she want to happen? I'm really angry. Why can't she just accept that we don't want her services anymore?" the mother said.

Referring to the mother, the land-lang Ums lashing for trying to claim the civil damages awarded by the Makati court that found Smith guilty of rape.

"I suggested that," the said, adding that she wanted the deal to be "OK" and done with before the case returned to Zamboanga.

But the mother gave no details on how she got through to Smith's camp.

She said she had asked around and was not about to just forget the money. "Negotiating lawyer also kasy pauso ... Saying do 'yes.'

"I really wanted this to be over, to get it off, to close the chapter," the mother said when reached by phone yesterday in her native Zamboanga City.

Earlier, she said Nicole had flown to the United States to get the deal behind her and start a new life.

But of the petition read: "From the sequence and timing of events, it is not difficult to conclude that everything has been orchestrated so that in the end, Smith will get acquitted and the public will accept the acquittal.

"With the acquittal, the issue of Smith's custody by the US Embassy, which has become legally untenable and a foreign relations nightmare to both the Philippine and US governments, will disappear."

The petitioners said the acquittal would remove the US military's obligation to produce Smith in court.

Today, the penalty of the motion's knowledge of the private details of the testimonies of proved momentum, leading the public to believe that the fact already taken back her complaint of rape.

"While the supposed sworn statement of Nicole has been called a 'recant' by the media, in truth the issue is not a recant," the petitioners said.

"In fact, open to examination by the lawyers who are petitioners in this case, they have ascertained that there is no inconsistency between the new statement and the testimonies of Nicole and other witnesses before the Regional Trial Court of Makati City," they said.

Perjury

The petitioners said the supposed recantation was a violation of their media.

"Despite the paucity of the motion's knowledge of the private details of the testimonies of Nicole and other witnesses, officials and reporters concluded that Nicole recanted and the may have committed perjury," petitioners said.

"The first one was reportedly transported by no less than the secretary of justice," they said, adding:

"So the media reconstructed the Nicole's alleged recant, the public instantly concluded that no rape occurred because Nicole's second-day story of violation did not fit the public's limited understanding of rape as a crime committed through force lence, in the struggle de la fitza rape case paradigm, or by a monster pouncing on a hapless woman."

The petitioners said the circumstances and timing of Nicole's recent statement were unbelievable. They pointed out that Nicole's letter to Ums requesting her legal services were submitted by Smith's lawyer Jose Justiniano to the appellate court without any indication of being received.

They also raised critical questions, saying the supposed recantations were also unlocked by a member of the Sycip Salazar Hernandez and Gatmaitan law firm, to which Justiniano belongs.

No weight

Nicole's recent statement and letter to Ums formed part of Justiniano's submission to the Court of Appeals on March 17.

But the petitioners said the sworn statement had no legal weight "[since] done to influence the outcome of the appeal."

They also questioned the Manila Times' publication of retired Justice Dizon's draft decision.

"There is no reason for the release of such a draft document other than to again influence public opinion," they said.

The petitioners likewise said the Supreme had violated the Rape Victim Assistance and Protection Act of 1998.

"For the first time, Nicole's face was published on the front page of the Philippine Daily Inquirer with the caption, 'The Unveiling, Unmasking of Nicole,' in gross violation of Section 5 of Republic Act No. 8505," they said.

According to a footnote in the petition, Section 5 states that "the name or personal circumstances of the offended party ... shall not be disclosed to the public."

'My fault'

But Nicole's mother said Ums did not. should not question the Sycip Salazar Hernandez and Gatmaitan law firm, to whom office Nicole signed the affidavit with her mother and brother as witnesses.

"It's my fault. That's not their fault. The reason] is, it was not Justiniano who approached us," the said.

Panlilio 2010 run doesn't worry Palace; says it has own standards

Front page A1

as we pose no judgment to his qualifications or his chances as a national candidate," Official Claudio, presidential political adviser, said in a text message.

Press Secretary Jorge Bolmaro agreed. "It does not worry us. That's why our candidate there is. We're welcome as anyone else is welcome," he told reporters here.

Since declaring he was open to running for president in the May 2010 national elections, Panlilio has been drawing broad support from civil society and political groups.

Panlilio, who is suspended from performing priestly duties, captured the public imagination when he delivered expert-sword and unsworn] politicians in the 2007 elections in the home province of President Macapagal-Arroyo, and introduced reforms.

One reform—initiating an efficient query for collection system that has brought in hundreds of millions of pesos—has attracted him from other provincial and local officials although still his detractors. Panlilio is seen having serious support.

The group seeking to convince Panlilio to run for president is also pushing for Batasan Gov. Grace Padaca, 45, as his running mate.

'Improbable but not impossible'

Claudio, senior deputy secretary general of the ruling Lakas-CMD, said the party would leave the "three interest and decision" to run for president to Panlilio and "his supporters."

"We will not in any way interfere with the decision. The administration coalition has its own standards, criteria and selection process," he said.

Asked if Panlilio would get the administration's support if he decided to seek the highest public post, Bolmaro said: "Anything is improbable, it is not impossible."

"At this said, the President will support those who will contribute her vision and those who will have a proven track record in delivering her program regardless of who she or he is or where at this point," he added.

The administration coalition is reportedly grooming Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro to be its standard-bearer in 2010.

Rebuffing, officials will remind Teodoro's announcement that he wanted to be the country's next leader, accepting the qualifications and resigning him to 15 Presidential Bench Obama.

Teodoro, however, has to show "winnability" to get the Arroyo's endorsement.

Also being considered by Lakas-CMD leaders as candidates are Vice President Noli de Castro, who has consistently topped polls but has not declared his plans; Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority chief Bayani Fernando.

Sen. Pia backs gov

Sen. Pia Cayetano yesterday added her support to calls for a Panlilio-Padaca tandem and said, noting that a more diverse field of candidates would give voters more options and better chances of pushing for reforms.

"Both have proven track records in initiating change and clean governance at the local level. We'd like to see more 'reformers' at the national level, and so the prospect of them running for higher office should be welcomed," Cayetano said.

In the case of Padaca, she's a hard-hitting radio announcer "who overcame polio and lost being a woman and non-politician to win a tightly contested election in her province of Isabela," Cayetano said.

"Both governors should give them a fair chance to make their electoral strikes. Women bring a different perspective in governance," she said.

Dy dynasty

Isabela Rep. Faustino Dy III said Padaca was not qualified to run for vice president.

"Forgive me, but [Padaca] is the least qualified to run for vice president. Inexperienced and incapable, she has been no big star else in her stepping stone [to politics]," Dy said.

The Isabela congressman said the public attention Padaca had received media attention and she had been using this to her advantage.

Dy is a member of the Isabela political family that Padaca defeated in the 2004 and 2007 elections. Padaca's victory over Dy's brother, Faustino Jr. and Benjamin, stopped the 40-year hold of the Dy family on the province's top executive position.

But Pedaca's ally, Isabela Rep. Edwin Uy said the governor was very qualified to become vice president.

Between good, evil

One of several groups pushing for the presidential candidacy of Panlilio claimed that the 2010 polls would be a battle between good and evil.

Alumni Sulo, Kaya Natin movement lead convenors said the group was urging Panlilio to seek the presidency because he represented reform and alternative politics.

At "The Forum" in Manila, Sulo said a coalition of politicians would bear votes and give reasons.

"Don't why he needs P1 billion to P2 billion. As alternative candidate, in the experience of Panlilio and Padaca, receives money from the people," he said.

Inspiring but ...

If Panlilio wants to bring change to the country as its chief executive, he should first convince the electorate of his province's most famous daughter, Ms. Kampi, according to Arroyo's top Alyn lieutenant.

Hendiveon said that while the governor's electoral triumph in Pampanga was inspiring, he should begin being down his position on national issues and explaining the reforms he would set in being about at the national level.

Rich reports from Michael Lim Ubac, Amanda G. Andrade, Lyla A. Salazar in in Manila, Villamor Visaya Jr., Inquirer Northern Luzon

Pareño makes dramatic dash from ladies room

Front page A1

"Gina explained that the restroom was very far from the hall," Mikaela said. "And then she panicked to deliver what would be the night's biggest surprise: quietly sharing her victory with some Anilya Jose, who was also nominated."

"Jackie" tells the story of a female who operates and floor to a succession movie house where passionate pls thats trade.

Back to work

The next day, Pareño had to run thing on her mind—flying back to Manila to the could return to work at the ABS-CBN soap, "Tayong Dalawa."

She had only that one free day to attend Monday's event, she told the business. In fact, she said, she almost skipped the ceremony.

"My daughter Raquel (Shaneen) and I received our plane tickets only on Saturday, two days before the flight."

All that rush surely made Pareño look out, but Mendoza persuaded on her to attend.

"She was a [bracelet] in her category and the Hong Kong International Film Festival Society (event organizers) wanted to be sure she would come," the filmmaker said.

16 films from 11 countries

This year, 16 films from 11 Asian countries vied for the 13 awards given at the end of the fifth fest.

Japan dominated the event of winners, with Takeshi Kitano's, by Kinoshi Ikemoto's one rebellion to the late great Ichiro Kutsumoto), capturing Best Picture, and Mizukoka Kowada being named Best Director for "Still Walking." Both were awarded in Sunday dinner.

A Chief Executive movie, "Temptress"—which won the Orchid Best Foreign Language Film trophy last month—climbed the Best Actor award for lead star Mendoza-Mendoza.

Pareño and Aoyo competed with Japan's Aoi Yu for "Love Me Laughing Shallow" and Kiki Kijiri for "Still Walking," and South Korea's Kim Ji-Young for "Forever the Moment."

Aside from the winners Rewards, Mendoza was up against such big names as Hollywood's Joan Chen, director of the 2006 Toni Leung movie "MET"—for "Red Cliff" and Japan's Miyazaki Hayao for "Ponyo on the Cliff by the Sea."

Best Supporting Actor was South Korea's Jung Woo-Sung, for "The Road, the Trail, the Mirror." Best Actress, Chinese Zhou Xun, for "The Equations of Love and Death," and Best Newcomer, China's Ye Hao-Wenjun, for "Forever Enthralled."

Not her first

This is the second International Competition prize for Pareño's performance in a "Serbia."

She was named Best Actress last year at the 6th Pacific Meridian Film Festival in Vladivostok, Russia, where Mendoza was Best Director. The movie itself was the country's entry in the competition section of the 2005 Cannes Film Festival.

Prior to "Serbia," Pareño won Best Actress trophies for Anthony Jutukan's 2000 film "Kabi-nihe" at the Osian's-Cinefan Festival of Asian and Arab Cinema in New Delhi, the International Festival of Independent Film in Brussels and the Amiens International Film Fair in France.

With a report from AP

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 2010 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER A9

Oil firm joins new round of price hikes

FOLLOWING THE MOVE OF SEAOIL OIL players, PTT Philippines have raised prices of gasoline by P1 a liter, and diesel, by 50 centavos a liter effective 12:01 a.m. today.

On Tuesday, Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Chevron Corp., Eastern Petroleum Corp. and Flying V Philippines led the new round of price increases. Those first firms had also hiked prices of their kerosene products by 50 centavos a liter.

Eastern Petroleum president Per Magnussen explained that the kerosene increase was caused by the $111/bbl increase in Dubai petroleum product since the beginning of the month.

Similarly, Shell vice president for communications Bobby Kanapi said the move to hike prices of petroleum products was to "reflect higher product costs." Jong E. Rivera

Cha-cha only 20 votes shy; oust-Nograles moves on

From page A1

to it if it's there already. Right now, she's moving the stands' to her children. She's still undecided."

Mikey told the Inquirer he had not withdrawn his signature from the resolution and that the Charter change (Cha-cha) issue would come to a head "very soon."

Very soon

Villafuerte is gathering 197 signatures for the resolution before filing it. The member-reporter is the lone member of the committee on constitutional amendments under the Commission rules.

"It's just 20 votes shy," Hilao said of the tough number.

But he pointed out that the House resolution would not go to the committee on constitutional amendments but to the Committee on rules, which has the power to endorse it directly to the plenary for deliberation by the House, saving approximately to amend any provision of the Charter.

The Senate has objected to Cha-cha, with majority of senators preferring a constitutional convention after the 2010 elections.

Hilao said Ms Arroyo knew that her time in Malacañang was running out.

'Hawks' pulling strings

But "hawks" in the Cabinet were pulling the strings so that the administration-controlled House would finally endorse the move which will give Ms Arroyo a fresh new term—either as interim president or prime minister.

Solicol & Ms Arroyo's camp could muster enough votes in the House to have Cha-cha, Hilao said it would depend on whether Ms Arroyo would "go all out."

Ms Arroyo has not taken a public position on the Cha-cha move. Hilao admitted he had said it was moving away from a purely legislative function.

Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez of Kampi said that the House should be able to tackle the Cha-cha resolution upon the resumption of its session on April 13 following the nationwide Easter break.

"But we will not able to come to a decision on the Cha-cha if we do not debate it during the plenary. Until then, the issue will constitute to hang over our heads," Suarez said in a press conference.

Senate to SC

Hilao said that there was no reason to declare the Cha-cha "dead" until he and the rest of the 188 congressmen who had signed the Cha-cha resolution had taken their names off the list of endorsers.

The House interpretation of the majority vote creating a Cha-cha is expected to provoke the Senate into seeking a ruling from the Supreme Court.

Should the high court uphold its position, the House will proceed with the move to change the Charter that critics fear could include lifting of term limits.

On Oct. 25, 2005, the Supreme Court dismissed by an 8-7 vote a petition for a "people's initiative" to amend the Constitution and adopt the parliamentary system, saying it would see itself itself to be a party to a "grand deception."

The high tribunal then said that it would not allow the Constitution to be "set adrift ... in unchartered waters, to be tossed and tattered by every dominant political group of the day."

While members coming up in the Supreme Court that Ms Arroyo would fill, there are fears that an administration-dominated tribunal could rule in her favor if the Cha-cha vesting question comes up.

Nograles an way out?

Hilao to revive the Cha-cha resolution have spurred rumors that Speaker Prospero Nograles, who has been criticized for his ineffective steering of Charter change, was on his way out.

Lone Rep. Imelda Dimaliwalas, one of the major sponsors of the resolution, is supposed to be moving with with Pangasinan Rep. Jose de Venecia Jr. and officiating him back his old post as Speaker.

Although De Venecia had a falling out with the President after his son opposed the scandal-tainted ZTE deal, the administration apparently still considers him the best man to rally support in Congress for Cha-cha.

Mikey has denied feeling ill-will to oust Nograles or appointed De Venecia. But he said Nograles should take rumors of his ouster as put for the count.

"The Speaker of the House is the most vulnerable position in Congress because he can be changed anytime by the members since they lose confidence in him, he should know that," Mikey said.

Best legacy

Villar called on Ms Arroyo to once and for all stop Cha-cha and spend her remaining months in office working for her legacy—"pull us out of the financial crisis and peaceful transition of power in 2010."

"That's the best legacy she can leave. That's a one-two punch," he said.

Villar said Ms Arroyo has two other options, besides Cha-cha. "Declare martial law—I don't think it's likely, but there's still a chance it will be declared so—and flood a erasable presidential candidates, or she will not support anyone at all."

He said Ms Arroyo's support be a friendly successor in Malacañang could be "hidden or declared out in the open."

Another route

Besides the Cha-cha mode, another route was prepared by Nograles under House Resolution No. 727.

In the resolution, he proposed to amend the Commission's economic provisions to relax barrier ownership of domestic businesses, including those that the Charter limits to Filipino citizens such as media entities.

Nograles said his resolution would take the legislative process route, which means that after the House approved it, the proposed measure would be sent to the Senate for its own action or concurrence.

The Nograles resolution is up for plenary debate when Congress resumes session next month.

JV Ejercito hires PR woman named Dacer

From page A1

Joan Marie JV Ejercito, a son of the ousted President.

Rhodie initially insisted to reporters in court lunch at Glorio Maris restaurant in Greenhills that she was only a distant relative of the late politician on her father's side of the family.

But Ejercito later said the statement "doesn't matter" anymore.

"I never even realized the statement until you pointed it out," Ejercito told the reporters.

He said there should be no controversy with his hiring Trinidad, a former chair of the Integrating Reinsurance (SEC), who he described as a "homegrown citizen" of San Juan.

Trinidad, who holds a bachelor's degree in mass communications from Centro Escolar University and a master's degree in the same field from Ateneo de Manila University, said she also came from Imed, like the late Dacer.

She said she met him for the first and only time when she was still the OIC chair during the minority of Ejercito's half-brother, now Sen. Jinggoy Estrada. "He sought me out when he heard my surname was also Dacer," she said.

No bad blood

The Department of Justice has said it would reopen the preliminary investigation the case involving the abduction and killing of Dacer and his driver Emmanuel Corbito in December 2000.

Former Senior Supt. Cesar Mancao II, one of the accused in the double murder, recently issued an affidavit to the United States linking Estrada and Sen. Panfilo Lacson in the crime.

Both men have denied involvement and said Mancao-Imbong was behind the move to implicate them in the murders.

According to Ejercito, there was no bad blood at all between the Dacer and his family, and there was no reason for his family to resist the petition filed.

"He was really close to us. He even considered each him with no strings to Taiwan," he said of Dacer.

Trinidad said her surname should be Dimal, after her husband, but she chose to use her maiden name in media circles. She previously worked as a reporter covering Congress for dzRH radio.

She said Ejercito actually offered her the job about a year ago, and she accepted it only last week.

"We've been friends since I was an HR clerk, so that Dacer issue is not an issue at all," she said.

Lawyer claims Dumlao no longer accused in Dacer-Corbito case

By Norman Bordadora

FORABES SUPT. GLENN DUMLAO has had been ordered dropped from the list of accused in the double murder of Salvador Dacer and Emmanuel Corbito, according to Felix Vistan, his UP-based lawyer.

Vistan said yesterday said the Philippine Department of Justice had "misrepresented" the Supreme Court decision promulgated on Oct. 3, 2005, that, he claimed, excluded Dumlao as an accused.

"This misrepresented that the Solicitor to People dismiss allegedly 'exclusive' the Dumlao as an accused, when in fact, that decision 'excluded' him as an accused," Vistan said in an e-mail interview.

"What is even more pathetic is that the [Makati Regional Trial Court] judge believed the misrepresentation by the Philippine [DOJ] without even reading the Solicitors decision, and then issued the warrant of arrest," the lawyer said.

A copy of the decision on the Supreme Court website reads: "Wherefore, in view of all the foregoing, the Decision and Resolution of the Court of Appeals dated 04 April 2002 and 12 August 2002, respectively, are hereby affirmed with the modification to include Fifi Sayo, Glenn Dumlao as one of the accused excluded from the remedial information dated 17 September 2000... No costs."

Typo error

Senior State Prosecutor Phillip Ellipio, one of the members of the DOJ panel that handled the Dacer-Corbito case, said it was a "typographical error."

"It should have read 'to include Dumlao previously excluded' or 'who has been previously excluded,'" Ellipio told the Inquirer.

"The point was, Dumlao was previously excluded from the list of accused by the lower court," he said.

Ellipio said the chief Justice was caught from the Supreme Court because both the prosecution and defense had accepted that the decision was to include Dumlao.

"That's why I was surprised when I read about this issue," he said.

Ellipio said no lawyer was representing Dumlao at that time in 2005 because he was already dismissed.

But Vistan said it was "plausible" that the Makati court gave credence to the purported misrepresentation and issued the warrant of arrest.

He said the warrant had the basis for the government's request for Dumlao's reinstatement.

"They unbundled the provision to expedite the reinstatement of Sr. Supt. Dumlao. Hey where is due process?" he said.

Torture

Vistan said Dumlao was afraid but was willing to tell what he knows about the double murders.

"Mr. Dumlao really fears for his life if he were to remain in the custody of the Philippines. According to him, he was already tortured before. So, who can blame this guy for not returning?" the lawyer said.

"Anyway, Mr. Dumlao has always been willing to shed light on what he knows about the Dacer-Corbito double murder case."

witness is Richard Ray," the senator said, referring to another of the accused in the Dacer-Corbito case and, like Mancao, one of Lacson's trusted aides in the Philippine National Police at the time of the murders.

Pimentel also said the missing of Mancao's affidavit was "improper" as is involved "political personalities." But he also noted the importance of considering the interest of the Dacer and Corbito families who continued to seek justice for their loved ones.

In his affidavit, Mancao claimed to have heard Lacson, then the PNP chief, order deputies to liquidate Dacer during a car ride in 2000.

Mancao is awaiting cross-examination from Lacson's lawyers.

Last week, Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile said Aquino was the "key person" in the allegations against Lacson.

"Unless Michael Ray Aquino speaks, all of these statements of Mancao and [former Supt.] Cesar Fernandez [also in the case] ... [are] hearsay," Enrile told reporters.

Who posted bail?

Like Mancao and Aquino, Dumlao, another former Lacson aide and also among the accused in the double murder, is in the United States. A US court has already granted his petition for injunction delaying his extradition.

From Secretary Gorge Hernandez yesterday said it was intriguing how Dumlao managed to post a $100,000 when he had no chance to raise the money on the run.

According to Bernardo Jr., Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez was "wondering if there were parties that secretly helped" Dumlao.

"Whether we, we don't know. But the government will continue to try to have him returned," he said. Bernardo said at a briefing before the start of a Cabinet meeting in Iloilo, Bacgaiman.

'Lacson connecting'

"It's just a temporary setback," he said of Dumlao's delayed extradition. "We know the

Dumlao kin backs him all the way

IN CAMAGAN, ISABELA, Dumlao's relatives are hoping that he would be extradited as he could clear his name.

"We were surprised by the turn of events. We know our uncle as a God-fearing person so we did not expect [him to be implicated in the double murder]," said Lydia Bellmonte Jr., Dumlao's nephew.

"We will support him whatever happens. We believe that he is innocent," Bellmonte said.

Dumlao's wife, Julie, and their four children live in Barangay Catabayungan East in Cabagan.

Julie Dumlao could not be reached despite repeated efforts.

quest for justice to attempt and oftentimes a difficult one, but this should not discourage us. Justice for Carlitos and justice for Dacer are imperative so it is to give justice to every Filipino."

Bernardo also refused a word of warning to Lacson's "At this point, everything is still speculation. What they're doing may give people the impression that he's connecting, and with the impression, people will start asking why."

Lacson yesterday came out with probe ads claiming that he was the target of attacks by the Arroyo administration.

He had earlier claimed that Malacañang had implicated him in the double murder to prompt another "big" expose that he was readying.

Bernardo said the pilot ads could be "a play of the senator to win public sympathy." With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Christine F. Esperanza in Manila; Villamor Visaya Jr., Inquirer Northern Luzon

Erap under fire for toy machine gun

From page A1

enforced.

'Ridiculous, absurd'

For his part, Bonoy who is said to the president of the United Opposition, described the PNP's allegations of gun-running as "ridiculous and absurd" and part of a smear campaign on the opposition. The mayor had earlier announced that he was interested in running for the presidency next year.

Chief Supt. Jesus Randol, CSG head, said he was directed by his superiors to "go deeper into this, check who has bidding," by forming a team from the legal service, firearms and explosives division, and the Police Community Relations Group.

Maximum punishment

Randol said Estrada and Bonoy would be cited for violating Letter of Instruction No. 1264, issued by then President Ferdinand Marcos in May 1982, which penalized the sale, use and display of gun replicas. The law, however, carries a maximum punishment of confinement.

Randol said the PNP would strictly be within the bounds of law enforcement in handling the case. "As much as possible, we do not want to mix this with politics," he said.

According to a report by the Cebu Provincial Police Office in Camp Cinco, Estrada and Bonoy were aboard the vintage jeep with the machine gun replica, and in response to the family of Carmen Mayor Jessie Pan, during episode in the town.

The gun replica has already been surrendered to local police, firearms said.

Published reports on the Cebu trial said the two apprehension figures were on a four-town swing through northern Cebu in what seemed to be an opening salvo for Bonoy's presidential campaign.

'Curious' townsfolk

Randol said some "curious" town residents then brought up the matter to the local police and asked how come Bonoy and Estrada rode in a jeep that displayed a firearm.

The people might have mistaken the machine gun replica for a real one, he said.

"But there was no alarm among the populace," Randol said. "They used that jeep] as a means to campaign and that vehicle were. So people who are knowledgeable about that know that it was fake."

Estrada, canvassed to a papelan speaking in 2001, was later sentenced to life in prison for plunder but was pardoned in 2007 by President Macapagal-Arroyo, his predecessor.

But the famous movie star still remains a large following and has hinted that he may run again for president in the 2010 elections.

'Demolition work'

"It seems they (administration leaders) are trying to send a message to former President Estrada to stop his Bulong Dusonbumar around the country," Salonda said.

"It is unfortunate that the PNP is allowing itself to be used for political purposes," she said.

Bonoy said "the demolition job on genuine opposition may be obviously evident. These allegations should be ignored, but under the Arroyo administration, the ridiculous and the absurd are presented as evidence against administrative critics."

"Whichever, they might just charge us with terrorism for going around Cebu with a replica machine gun!" he said.

Topic of firearms workshop

The incident has also prompted the PNP to include the Marcos decree on gun replicas among the topics to be discussed in a three-day firearms workshop which starts today in Clark Field in Pampanga.

"We will take this up there because our law, LOI 1264, was formulated in 1982 so it's really very old," Randol said. With reports from Allison M. Lopez and AFP

Noli backs lifting of OFW ban to Lebanon

By Cynthia D. Balana

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO has endorsed the lifting of the government ban on the deployment of workers to Lebanon in order to give Filipinos more job opportunities in light of the global financial crisis.

In a meeting on Monday with Cabinet officials at his office in Pasay City, De Castro, the president's adviser on overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), said it was time the ban was lifted as the country situation in Lebanon had greatly improved.

The meeting was attended by Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo, Labor Secretary Marianito Roque, Foreign Undersecretary Ramon Gonzales, Foreign Undersecretary Rafael Seguis, Ambassador Jay Ginaita and Commission on Migration and Ocean Affairs Secretary General Henry Bensurto.

Ginaita, who had been to Lebanon several times to check on the peace and order situation there, told the group normalcy had returned since the 2006 armed conflict between Israel and Hezbollah when the Philippine government imposed the deployment ban.

"If this is the case, then there is no more reason to maintain the deployment ban to Lebanon," De Castro said. "Many of our countrymen badly need jobs today and Lebanon offers plenty of employment opportunities."

Diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Lebanon were established in 1946 but a Philippine embassy in Beirut was opened only in 1996.

There are over 20,000 documented OFWs currently in Lebanon, with 99 percent of them working in the households of the, reside Dominicans in Southern Beirut, according to the DFA.

Earlier, Lebanese honorary consul to Manila Joseph Assad said the country was safe and its labor market could still absorb workers.

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OPINION

Jump-starting peace

EDITORIAL

FORMER BRITISH PRIME MINISTER TONY Blair, of course, even if he were willing to do some troubleshooting for the mainland Mindanao peace process, would need his government's approval to be involved in that process. But as the Arroyo administration itself said, how exactly Blair might be of assistance is still up in the air. The proposals vary, from adorning a Group of Eminent Persons to perhaps serving as special adviser to the government. We shouldn't confuse the felicitous praise and heartfelten response of Malacañang to Blair's diplomatic pleasantries with a substantive development.

Indeed, it would be best to ponder for a minute how our Muslim brothers exist to Blair's recent statements during his whirlwind Philippine visit. One which he surely received handsome compensation, it being more along the lines of a taxpayer on the global leisure circuit from which retired heads of government derive their retirement bread and butter). In particular, his argument that there are "two different elements in the world of Islam."

This statement has caused a certain amount of unease among some Muslims, who believe there is only one Islam. In that context, Blair's opinions are in the nature of forcing a division among the faithful, so at least fostering what they consider to be a misleading impression about their faith. Concerning that faith, there can only be one community of the faithful. What may exist are different kinds of regional politics that have contending approaches towards the West.

But the political approaches of various groups, from the point of view of Muslims troubled by Blair's pronouncements, should not be confused with the Islamic faith. From this point of view, Blair is edging perilously close to dictating standards of behavior on Muslims, when he is not only a Christian (a Roman Catholic) but also a Briton, and both identities carry their own political baggage with regard to Muslims in various parts of the world, including the Philippines.

After all, as one such Muslim expressed it, Great Britain has a share in the woes of Mindanao by taking away Sabah from the Sultan of Sulu: both in striking a deal with Spain during the 19th century (formalizing the borders of their colonies) while giving the sultan the misleading impression he enjoyed their support, and also, in the 20th, when it declared Sabah a Crown Colony as the eve of Malaysia's independence, that is, registering it, formally, into the territory of Malaysia.

Still, the government obviously recognizes that the peace process cannot remain in its present moribund state. Its current choice of partners, the United States and Malaysia, having proven to be far from honest brokers, the government is searching far and wide, hunting high and low, for new partners in that process, though there is no reason to think why that honest broker should be so elusive. We do not have to look so far afield —and to figures, like Blair, who genuinely contributed to peace in his part of the world, to Northern Ireland specifically, but also generally contributed to its hospitality there in the Middle East—for partners for peace. We can look to our own neighborhood, but with greater discernment than the kind that complicated the peace process further by making Malaysia, with its own responsibility for meddling factions among Moro separatists, one of the heavy lifters in the process.

Further, we should recognize that on one hand, the United States and Malaysia have a stake in the Mindanao peace process, because they are concerned with radical fighters and their regional networks. We should welcome their positive contributions to our security and Mindanao's development. But if we truly desire a meeting of the minds with the many factions claiming leadership of the Moros, we should seek the assistance of those who have a long standing track record of friendly cooperation with the Philippines.

It's there, and it's Indonesia. That nation possesses the Islamic credentials, the correct regional perspective and a track record of a genuine sense of alliance with our country to be an honest broker to the peace process.

Another budding scam at NIA?

AS I SEE IT

Noel B. Cruz

PUBLIC BIDDING FOR THE AMOUNT OF 500 cubic meters or more by private contractors was established to make the transaction and public affairs honest, to make the awarding of the contracts transparent and so that the competitive biddings will make sure that the government will get the lowest price for the project and that the highest price it is willing a property for. But leave it to contractors and government officials to look for loopholes in the rules so that they will have an advantage over competitors.

One way is for contractors to collude among themselves so that one will bid a comparatively less price while the others will submit unusually high bids. The favored contractor naturally gets the award, and he then shares the profits with the other losing contractors who were merely window shopping or doing anything. This was what was done in the World Bank-funded projects which it exposed.

Another way is for the bids and awards committees to cajole for the rules and qualifications of bidders in favored contractors. This allows unqualified contractors for the bidding process more. This is what is being done in the planned acquisition of 913.4 billion worth of heavy equipment for the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) which Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano exposed in a privilege speech in the Senate sometime ago. This is also what is being done in the acquisition of voting machines for the automation of the 2010 elections, let us look at the NIA project first.

The NIA has invited prospective bidders to take part in its procurement of hydraulic excavators and tractors with trailers to be used for its RIDC (Restoration of Irrigation and Drainage Canal) project.

There were Civic Merchandising Inc., International Heavy Equipment Corp. (IHEC), Manila Machineries Inc. (MMI), Transport Equipment Corp. (TEC), Wilmi Merchandising Phil., Tractor Corp., and TEC Heavy Industries Corp.

The problem arose when NIA BAC imposed a rule requiring a distributor to be at least 25 years in business and 30 years as distributor to qualify for the bidding. Those who do not meet this requirement are immediately disqualified. The idea is an invention of NIA BAC and it is indirect violation of the Government Procurement Act (RA 9184) and its implementing rules and regulations (IRR).

NIA BAC and the NIA administrator justify this rule by arrogantly stating that this is their business judgment to make sure that the winning bidder "is not a fly-by-night company." Facts concluded that if the company has lasted 20 years it would last another 25 years. They equated 25 years of business experience as a guarantee of track record and reliability.

This is false and baseless: if this were true, then choosing the Top 10 of the most admired companies in the world or in any country would be based only on the number of years the companies are in existence and will not be evaluated in terms of their financial health, yearly growth, management organization, unique expertise, contribution in government revenues, leadership in the industry and profitability.

As a result of this rule, the NIA limited the qualified bidders to only two: Civic with a capitalization of P15 million (P15M) and TEC with a capitalization of P60M. Eliminated were Monark with a capitalization of P1 billion, and Mitsubishi with a capitalization of P800 million.

Why 25 years and not 30 or 50 years? Is Eleazar Mendoza and Mamitua, two of the leading and biggest distributors of heavy equipment in the Philippines Monark has been in existence for only 22 years while Mitsubishi has 23 years, while both Civic and TEC are more than 25 years old.

The NIA also registered in the Government E-Procurement System (GEPS) the number as "Agricultural Machineries" instead of "Heavy Equipment." Why? With so many engineers, why can't the NIA distinguish between agricultural machinery and heavy equipment? It is this another way of blocking and limiting bidders?

On the day of the bidding itself, the bidders' documents are opened to validate their bids. The BAC chairman's office instead of Classroom 4 at 2 p.m., as required in the bid document. CIAC's bid was found to have been submitted as early as 9 a.m., followed by TEC. Isn't this process similar to those pointed out by the World Bank in some of the local projects before?

The NIA claims there is no corruption because the bid price of both bidders were below the budget price, is this a sound argument? Both knocked bidders have their bids very, very close to the budget price. Civic's (bidder) P15M offered $15,000+ pesos within marginal price of $1,500 lower than TEC, while in Package 2, TEC offered $120,000 with a marginal price of $1,700 lower than CIAC).

Has there really a competitive bidding? A closed-wide Monark observed that their actual price is P6.2 million ($130,000) inclusive of VAT, payable on installment with no interest. They have abundant stocks that can be delivered immediately without waiting for six months to what the auditors will do. Do you know how much discount Monark can give for a flow down of 120 units? Some believes that the savings will be at least P250 million!

The BR of NIA 9184 states that for a bidder to be qualified, a company must have the experience of completing a single contract that is the equivalent of 50 percent of the Approved Budget Contract (ABC). This means that for a bidder to qualify, it must have a single contract of at least P500 million. A letter from the office of Secretary Pimentel written to the NIA clearly states that for the last 10 years, neither Civic nor TEC has an accumulation of sales of P250+ year for the last 10 years.

Is the NIA formulating new rules to discard qualified bidders to favor two assumed bidders that are offering prices way above the current market price?

Gus' lament

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

GUS LAGMAN IS THE MOST QUALIFIED TO talk about it. Never mind that he worked for Sandoval longer than most people can remember (or Honrado). Never mind that he is an IT expert and was the person who exposed the Hyatt Telecom scam, where the Comelec awarded its computerization program to a company that was not even qualified to bid. Mind only that he got used but fled for it by Benjamin Abalos Acting that continues to drag to this day in Makati and Mandaluyong. Anyone who gives personal of the ingenuity by the former Comelec chief, the former broker of WPP, and the still current "bodyo" king, must be the one hottest bring on this planet eminently fit to spoil on Philippine elections.

One has a lament. One this country would do very well to hear, and do something about. Which is that if the Comelec's version of computerization is used, it would make "Hello, Garci" look like "Hello, Kitty." Or for those who do not like metaphors, like pants-and-chanting.

The Comelec's computerization program will have a foreign company running it. Easy to find out all sorts of qualifications for such a company, but with the Comelec doing the bidding and with the three people in the Palace directing their hand, therefore, we have one very serious problem.

The program is called Optical Mark Recognition (OMR), which entails computerizing the election returns of all the way to the system. The ballots are pre-printed so that the voters merely mark their choices. The ballot is then inserted in a machine that reads it and transmits its contents to the servers.

The upside of this is that it is fast. The downside of this is that it is also fast. The machines are being assembled (they kept breaking down in the ARMM, probably deliberately caused, contrary to reports the computerized elections there were a resounding success), the transmission is not open to public scrutiny. Nobody knows what happens there. The ballot is preprinted and coded in a way only its creators know about. That is an organized invitation to an electoral holocaust.

The counting is what takes place in the precincts after the ballot boxes are opened, the part where the votes are tallied on a blackboard in plain view of everyone. Does disturbing occur there? Yes, but minimally. Of course you have flying ballots, of course you have ballot-switching, of course you have poor counting many ballot boxes. But the cheating here is small time and does not really materially affect the outcome of elections.

The canvassing is what happens after the results on the precincts are sent to the municipal canvassers to tally. This is where the big time cheating happens. But is what the Garci of this world, or runaway have-tarned-nots are, or a pile of trash. This is where 1,301 soldiers by becomes 4,282 by a couple of strokes to 1. This is where 2,500 becomes 12,500 and 13,784 becomes 28,784. These are not fanciful possibilities. Gus took the latter figures from the votes in Iloganan and Matanzas in the last elections.

And of course this is where digging boxes happens, which is the addition of votes to legitimate candidates and the subtraction of them from disfavored ones. That was what Garci specifically did to the votes for GMA and FPJ in Mindanao, where FPJ held a corresponding lead over GMA. In the last presidential elections, in eight provinces the total display boxes, or the summaries of votes per precinct from one municipality and added to another, totaled 958,360. Who got subtracted from and who got added to? Go figure.

The problem is simple and the solution equally so. The problem is not the counting, is it the canvassing. The solution is not to do away with the counting, or the system where voters carry-on to the polling places and their votes are counted in plain view of everyone...and prevent cheating in the canvassing. The latter can be done by computerizing the canvassing using software that is affordable to everyone and accessible to everyone.

That is Gus' proposal. He calls it the Open Election System, or OES. (To be continued)

Catholic hierarchy says no to Panlilio

THE MOVEMENT LAUNCHED BY A HERALDO-led society group, resting with a spectacular salvo at the Catholic bishops' Conference on Sin Panlilio's Gov. Sil Pandilio for president in 2010 to save this country from the rapacity of the multi-indicted "traditional politicians" has roiled the Catholic Church over the very secular notion of separation of church and state in a republican polity. The Church was spurred by the statement of intellectual he was "open to the possibility" of seeking the presidency in response to the civil society call.

The draft resolution seeks to make Panlilio run in 2010 with Isabela Gov. Grace Padaca as running mate. The movement has described this tandem as a candidacy "alternative" to the entirely jaded "corpse," augmented as responsible for the degradation of politics over more than 20 years of representative democracy in this country.

It did not take much for Panlilio to succumb, or to be cajoled by this Bishop's counterpart himself to formerly paraded members of Philippine politics.

We have always been exposed to the notion since the 1986 People Power Revolution that our political salvation lies in military coups and soldiers with messianic complex, of the likes of Lt. Col. Eduardo Montenegro, here in Manila, or that civil society is if the corpse, and the soldiers have failed to reborning society, the men of the cloth might fill the leadership vacuum and become the inspired "man of the hour."

Unfortunately for the promoters of this project in civil society, the Catholic hierarchy is not of the same mind. The Catholic hierarchy has been identified by the implications of this draft movement on the principle of separation of church and state.

Panlilio, who ran for governor in 2007 on a re-

ANALYSIS

Armando Doronila

formist and anti-corruption platform, defeated two administration-backed candidates, one of whom was identified with jueteng and the other with quarry syndicates in Bataan province. As governor, he swears two hats: that of a salaried executive official and of a priest on a vague status, considered by the hierarchy as "on leave." As such, he stands astride a blurred line separating secular and priestly functions, which has bred conflict of interest situations as a secular priest and initiator of spending in the spiritual needs of his flock as well as their secular concerns.

These conflicting demands have often been irreconcilable. For example, he was caught in a bind when he accepted cash handouts amounting to between P100,000 and P500,000 from Malacañang, distributed to congressmen, governors and mayors purportedly as assistance for them in civil projects, although the cause were actually intended to secure their support for a move to quash the impeachment complaint against President Macapagal-Arroyo. Panlilio later tried to return the money but Malacañang refused to accept it.

As a priest-holder and a priest, Panlilio recently might supposed to put into practice the dual secular and spiritual status of human personhood in a democratic state, on a polity that declares a constitutional separation between church and state. The susceptibility of Panlilio to the temptations of a movement to draft him for the presidency and the embarrassing contradictions of his dual role were too much for the Catholic bishops to tolerate.

In what sounded like an ultimatum, Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, read the riot act to Panlilio. In a statement titled, "On the Question of Political Leadership," Lagdameo warned no words in warning Panlilio to quit the priesthood if he runs for president in 2010.

Lagdameo conveyed a decision of the Permanent Council of the Philippines, which forbids bishops, priests and religious from active involvement in partisan politics. Lagdameo said, "I presume that Governor C. Panlilio, who is a priest, has been told about this and knows it. If he plans to run for the presidency, by reason of the separation of the Church and the state, it is best for him to seek dispensation from the priesthood, and so he will be free to engage in partisan politics."

Lagdameo explained that "dispensation from the priesthood" would mean removing Panlilio's ministry and authority as a priest. Panlilio was told that he could not perform priestly duties when he is not a governor in 2007.

Lagdameo also reiterated the Church's non-involvement in partisan politics. "The Church does not support and endorse any political candidates," Lagdameo said. "This applies also to Governor Panlilio. He would be up to civil society if members of the laity to identify and encourage genuine, and not 'non-stop' leaders for political renewal. He quoted Pope Benedict XVI who said, 'It lay part of the vocation of Christian lay people to their participation in politics in order to bring justice, peace and defense of true and authentic values of society.'

Lagdameo said there were alternatives to the kind of political leadership at present. "I believe that our country is not lacking in people from civil society who have the gifts of authentic, credible, moral and patriotic leadership," he said.

In plain words, the message is: The deep to off limits as a vocation to general for political leadership. The Church cannot be more emphatic than that. Full post limits.

West Coast memories

SOME YEARS AGO, THE GOOD CITIZENS OF La Jolla, a town near San Diego, California, decided to construct a sheltered cove as "The Children's Beach."

But the beach attracted more than just children, San Jones, attracted by the calm waters protected by a natural sea wall, began hanging out on the beach, swimming in close to where children could swim initially stunned the sea lions shooed away but the public took the animals' side.

Still, local sentiment apparently remains unchanged. "We've never had any problem with them," Mayor Susan Brown told me when I met her at the beach. "They're not here to stay although not without controversy. You won't find any children there, though."

Indeed, at La Jolla's Children's Beach, it's the sea lions that attract tourists. Children's Beach is now ringed with a viewing deck, where passersby would sight and photograph the sea lions lolling on the sand. The beach itself is cordoned off with signs warning against approaching the animals or disturbing their rest. We were content to watch about two dozen sea lions enjoying the sun, sand and surf. One lay on its back, appearing to be making "sand angels" as it moved its flippers up and down. Others were content to stretch up and down on the waves, using our kodaks to take their snapshots.

* * *

PLATTO sea lions are just part of the attractions of San Diego. Another is the island of Coronado, which is a short ferry ride from downtown at a local cost), boasting an honkytonk type of coffee, sandwiches and two kinds of coupes: a "Mississippi" coupe flavored with rie-

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

sauteed and a dazzling of powdered sugar, and a chocolate-flavored coupe topped with strawberries, whipped cream and chocolate sauce.

To burn off the calories, we walked to the Hotel del Coronado, a wooden structure that is more than a hundred years old with its own private beach. Some said Victorian lobby. The hotel, which has recently been opened up, was the site of the movie "Some Like it Hot," starring Marilyn Monroe.

As I marveled at the lobby's weather and friendly, outdoorsy neighborhood, I learned that almost lamenting the "real" reasons for the change in partner for classmate at UC San Diego.

There was no time to drop by the world-famous San Diego Zoo or Sea World, but as we drove north to Los Angeles, I meditated why the area would attract a rather affluent people who love the outdoors. Part of the attraction, yes, I must add, is that with a sizeable Filipino population, San Diego is also home to workers from the Philippine consular mission in Kalifornia, Chula Vista and Escondido.

* * *

I HAD intended my stay in the U.S to accommodate a request from my Singapore relatives to hold a book launching of our "Singapura Book" in their part of the US.

Before this, though, my cousin Mabes planned on coming to Las Vegas, booking both of us in the city's newest hotel casino, Encore, a "younger sister" of the Wynn, to celebrate her birthday. The glitzy splendor of Encore's rooms took our on the Wynn, with the casino magnate's signature pressing in the skyline. Encore boasts luxurious interiors indeed, with interiors done in subdued tones and a feeling of overlaying opulence.

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The revolution reborn

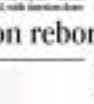
MEXICO CITY—IN EL SALVADOR, FOR THE first time ever in Latin America, a former political-military organization that tried to gain power through the barrel of a gun has achieved it through the ballot box. Although the Sandinista Front in Nicaragua did win a most legitimate election in 1984, it had pushed power five years earlier by overthrowing the Somoza dictatorship. In 2000, when Daniel Ortega was finally re-elected, the old Sandinista Front of the 1980s was practically gone.

El Salvador's Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN) was created in 1980, through the fusion of five guerrilla groups supported by Cuba and Nicaragua. The FMLN nominated a persuasive and attractive candidate, Mauricio Funes, who won the presidential election last month despite scoring a 10-point lead stretched down to barely two points by election night, squeaked out an unanswered victory.

The conservative ARENA party, which has governed El Salvador since the country's 12-year civil war, has been in power for 20 years. During the 12-year civil conflict, over 75,000 people were killed, and the country was ravaged by the fighting. According to MSNBC's relentlessly negative campaign, a triumph for the Left would bring communism. Hugo Chávez, and the Castro brothers to San Salvador.

But recent election did not work this time. There is a divorce in Latin America between the leftward tilt taken by urban left-wing political movements and guerrilla groups in Latin America. The Socialist Party in Chile, the Workers Party in Brazil, the Broad Front in Uruguay, even Chávez in Venezuela and the Left in Peru have all come to power through democratic elections. In Nicaragua, on the contrary, have shown that, after years in power, the Left can win elections in Latin America.

The difference between these executions lies in that El Salvador's FMLN will be invested when the FMLN's old characteristics as an armed movement are now challenged by the daily tasks of governance. Mr. Funes' Prime is an old guerrilla hand, his vice president, Salvador Sanchez Ceren, and almost all the current FMLN leadership are veterans of the guerrilla wars and their commanders.



WORLD VIEW

Jorge G. Castañeda

Instead Comrade guerrilla leaders and cadres. It is they, not Funes, who control the FMLN's organization. The FMLN's most reform-minded, democratic, modern, and brilliant leaders—Facundo Guardado, Joaquín Villalobos, Salvador Samayoa, Ana Guadalupe Martínez, and Hermán Worthington—have left the party.

A second worrying factor is the FMLN's links to Cuba and Venezuela. As recently as a year ago, anyone who visited FMLN headquarters in San Salvador to interview, for example, Cuban, its secretary general, would have been struck by the overwhelming presence of Chávez and Castro, and heroes, pictures of the democratic caudillo, emblazoned on his buildings and meetings.

Chávez helped the FMLN by giving free oil cheap oil to its mayors in many parts of the country, and probably thought it has one here present by chance. Nicaragua, Cuba is small potatoes, so the cost of its electoral coffee. The Cuban presence also remains strong, although the worst political peoples initiated by Raúl Castro make it difficult to know who exactly is working for whom. Ramón Alvez, who "ran" El Salvador for Cuba's Department of the Americas for decades in the 1980s and 1990s, remains but now more as a businessman and a senior statesman than as a Cuban operative.

But Cuba's influence on the old FMLN leadership remains intact. Cuban and Venezuelan interference in political parties in Mexico or Brazil, for example, would be unthinkable. Here are examples very relevant. Those are large countries with huge economies, where scrupulous and dueling out small perks and favors is not very effective.

In El Salvador, like Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Ecuador, is another story.

A third factor that weighs in the balance in an evolving urban sort of governance the FMLN may inherit is the economic crisis that is battering Latin America. For the moment, it is impossible to ascertain whether the recession will provoke a radicalization of the Left in the region, which Chávez seems to be promoting, or rather moderation through responsible behavior. In any case, waves of revolutionary goals seeing to transplant cross-oceanic conditions. We will know soon.

But the most important consequence of the FMLN's victory may lie in its effect on the rest of Central America and Mexico. Honduran President Ricardo Maduro, who has pursued tough policies and demagogy than conviction, has moved into the Chávez orbit. Nicaragua's Ortega was always part of that orbit, as are people close to Alvaro Colom in Guatemala. If we add El Salvador to this list, only Costa Rica and Panama to the south remain outside the loop, leaving Mexico to the north increasingly exposed.

Moreover, the Central American nations do not wield huge influence in Mexico; if anything, it is the other way around. But the Mexican Left, while no longer as weak as it was after its defeat in 2006, has always invoked foreign role models. Its electoral coffee. The Cuban presence also remains strong, although the worst political peoples initiated by Raúl Castro make it difficult to know who exactly is working for whom. Ramón Alvez, who "ran" El Salvador for Cuba's Department of the Americas for decades in the 1980s and 1990s, remains but now more as a businessman and a senior statesman than as a Cuban operative.

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Jorge G. Castañeda, former foreign minister of Mexico (2000-2003), is a global distinguished professor at Rutgers and Latin American Studies at New York University.

Father President?

THERE IS NO HOLDING LAW THAT PREVENTS FR. ED Panlilio from running for public office, unlike in Mexico, where the constitution prohibits members of the clergy from holding public office. Ironically, what would stop Panlilio from running is his own Catholic Church, which has been embroiled about "political" priests. Panlilio has in fact been suspended from "priestly duties" since he became Pampanga's governor.

I see no question marks for the word "political" because the Catholic Church has actually been political for 2,000 years, with priests themselves wanting great political power; while cardinals and bishops have actively intervened to make, or break, kings and queens and presidents.

In the last half century, the Vatican has set its sights on liberal groups. Up until 1960, priests were allowed to run, even if they had the permission of their bishops, but there were bans here as well, especially if the bishops were conservative and the priests running for office were liberals. In 1960, Pope John Paul II mandated that priests should withdraw from electoral politics, and in 1983, a new canonical law went into effect. It said that priests "are forbidden to take charge to say "public positions entailing participation in the exercise of civil authority."

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

Revolutionary priests

Nicaragua came to my mind almost immediately when I first read about a possible Panlilio candidacy. The late 1960s and the entire 1970s saw the rise of "priests for the people" in the Catholic Church in Latin America and the Philippines because of harsh dictatorships. It was during these difficult times that liberation theology gained a strong following among both the religious and lay Catholics (as well as some Protestants). Liberation theology borrowed from Marxism, pointing out the structural roots of poverty. Its impetus was to the good and compassion of local individuals and capitalism.

Liberation theology talked about a "preferential option" for the poor. Many religious and laypeople went to live in urban and rural poor communities, getting involved in community organizing and militant politics. The film "Romero" and La L," release 2000, commemorate in living celebrated this year, was based on the lives of Catholic priests in the Philippines who worked in urban poor communities, joining pickets and rallies and investigating human rights abuses, all amid a repressive martial law regime.

Liberation theology was also strong in Nicaragua, which was ruled by the Somoza family for several decades. As in the Philippines, Catholic priests were among those who opposed the dictatorship. This included a fiery-hand priest, Fr. Miguel Obando, who headed the US-based Nicaraguan solidarity movement.

The Sandinistas overthrew Somoza in 1979 and the new government appointed Father Miguel foreign minister. Fr. Ernesto Cardenal was appointed culture minister. Both priests later fell out of favor with the Sandinistas, lost their position and stayed on as foreign minister until 1990, when the Sandinistas lost power in elections. In 2007, when the Sandinistas came back into power, he was appointed as government adviser by President Daniel Ortega.

Father Miguel was one step to minor wrists, calling Bonaparte Ramazzini "a bishop of the rich" and "a bishop of Sin." Last year, he became president of the UN General Assembly, and has taken a more diplomatic approach to his declarations.

There were two other Nicaraguan priests, the brothers Ernesto and Fernando Cardenal, who clashed with their superiors, all the way up to the Pope. Ernesto, internationally acclaimed poet, was the Sandinista minister of culture from 1979 to 1988. Fernando was minister of education and launched one of the most successful adult literacy programs in the world. Both did not step down from their posts, arguing that the new canonical law came into effect after they had been appointed to the Nicaraguan government.

In 1983, when the Pope visited Nicaragua, there was tension when at one event, Ernesto Cardenal approached the Pope and knelt to kiss his ring. The Pope pulled back his hand and shook his finger at the priest.

Nicaraguan President?

Despite what could be called the Vatican stand, there's actually a Catholic bishop who ran for president and won. This is Fernando Lugo of Paraguay, who also has roots in liberation theology. He trained as a teacher, and then became an SVD (Society of the Divine Word) priest. He served as a missionary in Ecuador, then returned to Paraguay, only to be expelled by the Stroessner military regime because of his activism. He returned after the dictator was overthrown, was ousted, and stayed on to serve Paraguay. He was outspoken on issues of social justice, eventually becoming bishop of the diocese of San Pedro.

In 2006, this "Bishop of the Poor" decided to run for president and applied for laicization or a temporary leave from the priesthood, but his request was denied. Even so, he ran. His superiors said: bishops were not eligible for laicization. Lugo decided to run anyway and was suspended. He ran against a woman candidate of the conservative Colorado Party and won in the 2008 elections, breaking the Colorado Party's 61-year hold on Paraguayan politics. The Vatican has since pronounced him laicized.

Lugo is one of several leftist presidents now in power in Latin America, refusing to accept any presidential salary because the money "belongs to more humble people."

Avoid compromise

I should remember one last case here, from the United States, where a nun, Fr. Elizabeth Morancy, was Maine bench's congressman from 1973 to 1980. He was a liberal Democrat and ran on an anti-Vietnam War platform, unseating a congressman who had held office for 14 terms. (She read right, 14 terms, not 14 years... the US has no limits on the number of terms you can hold office.)

Obtain's close associate Vincent Mauro impeachment and pushed his governments funding for family planning and abortion. But he grew up his post in 1980 after Pope John Paul II banned priests from running for office. Obtain remained active in teaching, and continued to speak out on political issues. He died in 2007.

Should priests run for office? I'm ambivalent too. I suspect the Rizal Bible leaders of alternative politicians but I worry about how effective Catholic priests can be. Interest or not. A recent article by Jonathan Chua, "Different Standards: Different Faiths" on the website "Religion, Politics and Globalization Project" (http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/) points out that Catholics, whether priests or lay, have to be a double standard, where Protestant ministers can not. For public officials, Catholics are expected to follow church policy—from popes to bishops. Protestants or Catholics—laymen when it comes to Catholic priests assuming public office.

Chua notes that there is a difference between Catholic and Protestant clergy, the former having to obey the bishops, which is ironically in a "temporal matter that is also a democratic matter." Protestant ministers can not be held to the very clear stand his stand on a number of issues, from family planning to social justice, and if he has views different from the positions of the Bishops or the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, will he able to remain independent?

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Beyond the reach of the law

THIS IS IN REACTION TO THE NEWS ITEM titled "US says RP the failure to stop graft" and "Donations: What's the basis of 'the report'?" in the Feb. 24 issue of the Inquirer. Both referred to the "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices in 2008" prepared by the US state department and signed by then Secretary Hillary Clinton.

These reports confirmed the obvious reason American President Barack Obama does not want to see the face of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, much less to shake her hand, even bend, to talk to her, and least of all, to be photographed with her. The gesture the superpower surely have wanted to keep for posterity as to keep ahead as proof that Obama stands fast to remain in power.

The report also confirmed what we have believed all along that Obama had been leaning since Mr. Arroyo's impeachment, her alleged cup of discord and her clinging to power through force-majeure and deceit, which he most recently pointed out in his inaugural address.

And then most loyal lapdog of all, the misrepresentative named Kaal Gonzalez, who chose to abandon of justice and who either has Alzheimer's disease (for which reason he can't remember the basis of the US report) or simply ignores the investigative business and family members inflicting on this hapless nation, and who barks loudly up everyone who criticizes the Arroyo administration's illegacy and has the audacity to call himself a Filipino.

LETTERS

With lawyers like Gonzalez and Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez in key positions, and with the Supreme Court being filled with Arroyo appointees, we can never expect the Arroyos and their ilk to be prosecuted and convicted for the many charges of corruption levied against them.

—RODEN MOTOLA,
Bo@yahoo.com

Now is the best time to have nuclear power

ARE THERE OTHER OPTIONS? CERTAINLY are fossil fuel or coal-fired power plants which ignite our incidence gases, causing global warming and climate change. Wind and solar energy are not yet commercially competitive and can only generate power in limited quantities. Power through hydrogen fusion is many years away.

That is precisely ignorant caution power is that the Philippines is located on geological faults. So is Japan, but it operates 55 nuclear power units. (The world has a total of 439 plants in 31 countries. France alone has 59 nuclear plants. (The Guardian Weekly, 2004.)

Another argument is that lack of experience in operating these plants safely? Out of 90 million Filipinos? Was it education, Bell there, get him Australian, French or Japanese operators to run the nuclear military plant.

One last objection is from the Catholic Church. It is a waste of time to wait for solutions and a theologians to agree on anything. (No example, the argument between creationists and evolutionists will go on until kingdom come.)

The advantages of nuclear power far outweigh its disadvantages. Given the diminishing fuel oil reserves, oil will, in fact time for the importance for the average Filipino to afford. Besides, Filipinos cannot continue polluting the world with carbon dioxides, otherwise, they run the risk of being confronted militantly by their global neighbors.

—RAY VELOSO III, M.,
velosoray@yahoo.com

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Misamis Occidental
Municipality of Jimenez
(063) 0000 Tel/Fax

BID BULLETIN
ADDENDUM NO. 01
March 25, 2009

This addendum No. 01 is issued to modify or amend items in the invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid (ADBE) of the Construction of Jimenez Public Market as published last March 18, 2009 on the Philippine Daily Inquirer

ACTIVITIES	As Originally Published	As Amended
1. Submission of Letter of Intent (LOI)	On or before March 20, 2009 (03:00 PM)	On or before March 30, 2009 (03:00 PM)
2. Last Date of Submission, Interpretation, Clarification	March 20, 2009, 3:00 PM	March 30, 2009, 3:00 PM
3. Issue Notice of Eligibility and Invitation to Bid (ITB)	March 25, 2009 April 14, 2009	April 3, 10, 2009 April 24, 2009
4. Opening/Receipt of Bids	On or before April 14, 2009 (03:00 PM)	On or before April 24, 2009 (03:00 PM)
5. Pre-Bid Conference	April 7, 2009, 1:30 PM	April 17, 2009, 9:00 AM
6. Bid Opening	April 17, 2009, 9:00 AM	April 27, 2009, 9:00 AM
7. Completion of Work Period	180 Calendar Days	180 Calendar Days

For guidance and information of all concerned

(Sgd.) JOSE J. MARQUEZ
BAC Chairman

Republic of the Philippines
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills, Mandaluyong City
Metro Manila

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LEGACY TO FUND, INC.

ORDER OF SUSPENSION

This records on file with the Commission show the following violations committed by the subject Company:

1. Failure to submit to the Commission notice for those transactions from December 3, 2008 up to this date, in violation of SRC Rule 19-1 (c) (2) and non-payment of the prescribed penalty of Eight Thousand Pesos (₱8,000.00);
2. Non-submission of the monthly sales and redemption reports for the months of November, December 2008, January and February, 2009, in violation of SEC Rule 19-1(c)(3) and non-payment of the prescribed penalty of Fifty Three Thousand Pesos (₱53,000.00);
3. Non-submission of the Consolidated Statement Sheet for the years 2006 to 2008; and
4. Failure to submit an Affidavit of Undertaking to effect address (1st violation SORC Rule 17-2 (2)(2)(c)).

Despite the notice and extension of time given, the company has failed to submit without justifiable cause the aforesaid documents as of March 19, 2009 on the said offenses or violations.

Pursuant to the resolution of the Commission en banc meeting on March 19, 2009, the commission approved the motion of the Director of the Corporation Finance Department to suspend the Company for the said violations.

1. Publish its daily sale issues value Per Share from December 3, 2008 and pay the total prescribed penalty of Eight Thousand Eight Hundred Pesos (₱8,000.00);
2. Submit its monthly sales and redemption reports for the months of November, December 2008, January and February, 2009 and pay the total prescribed penalty of Fifty Three Thousand Two Hundred Pesos (₱53,000.00);
3. Submit its General Information Sheet for the years 2006 to 2008; and
4. Submit a current report on Form 17-C regarding the change in its office address.

The Company is hereby prohibited from offering or selling its securities to the public until the Order is lifted or set aside by the Commission.

Failure of the Company to comply with the foregoing directives shall be a ground for the revocation by the Commission of the certificate of registration of the Company and its subsequent delisting and its dissolution of Securities and Exchange Law.

(Sgd.) JUSTINA F. CALLANGAN
Director

FOR: MARIO G. ABAD
Commissioner

PVAO burial benefits in limbo

THE BRIN ART AUTHOR of the Inquirer's letters page for sometime now. I noticed that there are a lot of people with a problem similar to mine.

I had to wait about a PVAO Philippine Veterans Affairs Office) pensioner. She served in private first class under Medical Unit 94 Infantry Platoon MRI. She was discharged on Dec. 5, 1945. But, on Dec. 15, 2008, she passed away.

Knowing that the PVAO has a burial assistance package for PVAO pensioners, I applied for cash benefits on behalf of my aunt. My application was endorsed to PVAO, Iloilo City on Feb. 3, 2009 under claim no. 09-4709-00-000266. After several follow-ups, I received on Nov. 11, 2008 a letter from PVAO, Quezon City Office, telling me that my application had been approved under Barangay Law No. 10-0-09. Again, I sent a following letter but to date, I have not received any cash from them. What's the real status of my aunt's burial benefits?

—BRUCE BARRAZA,
Phase 1, Block 10, Tierra Village, Jaro, Iloilo City

If you have any complaints, comments or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to Public Editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Shaw Boulevard, Quezon City, or Makati or send a fax to the ABC-CBN, 927-4794, or e-mail opinion@inq.com.ph.

Writers of letters to the Editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter or column such information is supplied.

INQUIRER Northern

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Assoc. Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

Out of the ashes

By Padmapani Perez
Contributor

There's a growing public feeling that the Baguio market should be treated as a heritage site

AFTER THE BAGUIO CITY public market fire on March 2, something emerged from the smoke and ashes that surprised vendors and market-goers alike: The post-World War II pillars of the old market structure, covered in mere Ilagan stone.

The reappearance of the stone, whose color ranges from pinkish to violet, has made people nostalgic about the old Ilagata and ponder the future of the 181-year old market.

The vendors are back doing brisk business under donated tents brought in through the efforts of Steven Caldwell, president of the Baguio Market Plaza Multi-Purpose Cooperative. They do not have storage space yet, so every evening they take all their goods home and bring them all back in the morning.

A steady stream of market-goers and suki (regular customers) flows through the burned area, many pausing in awe at the pillars and the market's "new" old look. They praise the natural light, airiness, open space and the "Old World charm" that the pillars lend to the atmosphere.

The first market, built in 1908, was wood-en. The original 1917 Stone Market was re-placed by what is now the Maharlika build-ing. The pillars were built in 1932 when the city was recovering from World War II.

Some market goers said, "Mashinsin na sila. It looks better after the fire."

This may sound painful to mall owners who lost much, but they have made the same observations and want these taken in-to consideration in plans to rebuild the burned area.

Replica

Caldwell suggests building a replica of the old Stone Market. He says the coming of the market should be brought back. Ven-dors want new technology to keep the mar-ket clean, bright, well-ventilated and even fireproof.

Baguio people point out the need to create a growing populace and the availabil-ity of green technologies, which may en-able the market to generate its own energy, fix the waste, drainage, and sewage sys-tems, and blaze the trail of true zero-waste management.

Caldwell says: "Modernizing means we'll use new technology and designs, but maintaining the historical look of the mar-ket." He speaks for vendors when he rejects the suggestion to demolish the pillars and start from scratch.

There are plans to put temporary canvas roofing over the entire burned area. Caldwell says things could be better if the split-level market vendors were to cooperate.

Melvin Balon-ay grew up in the market and was a stall in the vegetable section. He says it would be better to have meet vendors from around the Cordillera to sup-port local economies.

He also says the promise market fosters friendship and a helping attitude. The vivid interaction and the flexible negotia-tions would be lost if a huge corporation were to come in, she says.

Stalemate

The market is in a legal stalemate with Uniwide, which was awarded a contract to develop it in 1995. The city government formed a task force to negotiate this matter.

VENDORS continue selling their wares amid the ruins.

THE OLD stone pillars of the Baguio public market, long concealed by makeshift stalls and merchandise, reappear after the place was gutted by fire on March 2.

"ITUMBA SI PING."

Ito ngayon ang sigaw ng mga sakim at makapangyarihang magnanakaw. Gagawin nila ang lahat para SIRAAN, TAKUTIN, O PATAHIMIKIN si Senador Ping Lacson sa kanyang laban kontra korapsyon.

Kung anu-ano ang paratang sa kanya para matakpan ang sarili nilang katiwalian.

KUNG MAY KASALANAN SI PING NA AYAW NIYANG MABULGAR, DAPAT SANA TAKOT SIYANG MAGSIWALAT NG KORAPSYON NG MAKAPANGYARIHAN. BAKIT PATULOY ANG KANYANG PAG-EXPOSE SA MGA CORRUPT?

Suriin natin. Sino nga lang ba sa simula't sapul ang hindi natitinag sa paghadlang sa pagnanakaw sa kaban ng bayan?

Matapang man si Ping, hindi niya kayang labanan nang mag-isa ang mga corrupt. Tulungan natin siya.

Kapit-bisig tayo para ipaglaban ang tama at ituwid ang mali. Bawat katiwalian na mapigil ay isang malaking tulong sa bayan.

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Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

Terror attacks on buses start again

COTABATO CITY—A HOME-made bomb went off but missed a bus—its apparent target—yesterday, signaling what authorities said was another series of attacks from extortion groups having ties with terrorist organizations.

Mayor Muslimin Sema said authorities believe the latest bombing was connected to previous attacks against a local bus company that has repeatedly rejected demands by extortionists.

"It appears that the bomb was intended for Shalky Bus Company. The motive is still extortion," Sema said.

He said the bomb was planted in a vacant lot on Tacurandan Highway and exploded a few seconds after the bus had passed by.

Sema said the bomb was made out of a 60-mm mortar shell.

It was the second attack on a Shalky Bus in as many days. On Sunday, a bomb exploded inside the Shalky terminal.

Also on Sunday in Kidapawan City, another bomb went off about four hours after an explosion near a police station overpass injured 11 people.

Supt. Chino Manalo-an, city police director, said the two bombs were both improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

The second bomb went off in a vacant lot in Barangay Nuangan.

Manalo-an said the two attacks were related.

He said authorities suspect an extortion group was also behind the attacks.

Kidapawan Mayor Rodolfo Gutierrez said in a radio interview that he received a text message from a man who identified himself as spokesperson of the al-Khobar extortion group.

He said the sender of the text message wanted him to do something if the group's demand of P350,000 was ignored.

Gutierrez said at around 6:30 p.m., a loud explosion near the pedestrian overpass occurred and injured the 11 victims, including children.

The military pointed to rogue Moslem Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels as perpetrators of the bomb attacks in Central Mindanao.

Col. Jonathan Perez, spokesperson of the military's 6th Infantry Division in Maguindanao, said the rebels had formed themselves into the al-Khobar and had urged all its former with the Islamic Identity, the Southeast Asian bonds of the International terror network Jemaah Islamiyah, the Southeast Asian bonds of the International terror network Jemaah Islamiyah, the Southeast Asian bonds of the International terror network Jemaah Islamiyah

NEWSBRIEFS

■ TAGUDIN CITY

DOH bans 'butete'

THE DEPARTMENT of Health regional office reviewed its call for the people not to eat puffer fish. "We have been telling our people in the past that eating puffer fish is dangerous as it could lead to death. It is not fit for human consumption as it is highly poisonous," health regional sectoral nurse Boyet Sorro said.

The warning came after a couple and their four children in Sumar experienced numbness in their lips, dizziness and vomiting after eating puffer fish on Sunday noon.

Joy E. Cabiles, Inquirer Visayas

■ CEBU CITY

Cop found dead

THE BODY of a police policeman was found in the Mandaw Channel off Pier 8, 11 Dec your what's in Mandaue City on Monday.

The Mandaue police said a fisherman found the body of PO1 Danilo Playda, 37, a native of Bogo, Cebu, but a resident of Tangke, Talisay City, and member of the Cebu City Police Office (CEPO) investigation and detective management branch.

Police are investigating the death. *Norman Mapalicas, Inquirer Visayas*

■ BACOLOD CITY

Phone thief sentenced

A REGIONAL Trial Court (RTC) sentenced to up to seven years to prison a former vice mayor for snatching a cellular phone from a college student seven year ago.

Bacolod Judge Rolando Chiongson on Wednesday found Paolo Luis Flames Alfonso guilty of robbery and ordered him sent to jail for four to seven years.

Chiongson also ordered Alfonso, who worked for private telephone stations, to pay P7,000 for his victim, Arleen Antonga, representing the value of her stolen phone.

Carla P. Gomez, Inquirer Visayas

■ DUMAGUETE CITY

Tax incentive

NEGROS Oriental provincial treasurer Basilio Mendez wanted municipal treasurers that may would lose their incentives if they failed to meet their target collection.

Mendez said the provincial government had been giving P1,000 in monthly allowances to the 19 municipal treasurers in Negros Oriental to improve real property tax collection.

However, Mendez said now more than half of the treasurers did poorly in collecting real property taxes.

In 2008, only seven of 19 municipalities in the province met their target tax collection.

He said at least P100 million in real property tax had remained uncollected partly due to the inefficiency of municipal treasurers.

Ronty Aranzado, Inquirer Visayas

■ BACOLOD CITY

2 held for guns

POLICE arrested a 68-year-old widower and his son who were allegedly engaged in gunrunning in San Carlos City in Negros Occidental.

Carlos Orozco Jr., 68, and his son Carlito III, 38, were arrested by police in an anti-gunrunning operation at a mall.

Seized from them were a .45 cal. pistol with a magazine containing eight live ammunition, PSSI Junjie Lilua said.

Carlo P. Gomez, Inquirer Visayas

■ ROXAS CITY

Cop faces charges

CHARGES of reckless imprudence were filed against a policeman who drove a police patrol jeep that sideswiped a jeepney and injured four of the 15 passengers in a road mishap last month.

The complaint was filed against PO3 Ronald Bilocon, assigned to the SOSIA Mobile Group of the Provincial Police Office.

The jeepney was bound for Sapi Bay Social camp in Barangay Malapoc Bas. Capiz when the patrol jeep slammed into it on Feb. 14 in Barangay Dubay, Mambusao.

The victims said Bilocon drove the patrol jeep without a license plate and without a driver. *Felipe V. Calma, Inquirer Visayas*

GLOBAL RECESSION

LGUs told to save, fund job creation

YIBIR
Creating an irrigation dam spanning the Chico River in Tinglayan, Kalinga, has been a daily part of the lives of residents in the villages of Mabaruan and Binuangan. The irrigation dam is the villages' only access to the town center where they trade vegetables and rice and buy household supplies. KIMBERLY DACAWAY

STO. TOMAS, PANGASINAN—PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered local governments to set aside 1.5 percent of their maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE) for emergency jobs as a measure to check the unemployment problem caused by the global recession.

"This is what the taxpayers deserve. All savings should go to help the poorest and even the middle class," Ms Arroyo told reporters here on Tuesday.

Emphasizing the need to conserve resources, Ms Arroyo also told engineering measures to government offices, such as using an electricity use by 10 percent and using fluorescent lamps instead of incandescent bulbs, and reducing the use of gasoline by 25 percent.

She said vehicles used by government offices should also be replaced with cars that run on natural fuel.

Challenging times

"The times are challenging. Let us stop spending on unnecessary things," she said.

Ms Arroyo also said the government would scrap the traditional Independence Day parade on June 12 to save the government some P50 million.

Instead, the government will hold a job fair on June 12-16 for people who lost their jobs, including overseas Filipinos who were laid off in Dubai and Qatar.

"It's time for everyone to unite. Let's focus our attention on our family and the community and start volunteerism and community spirit," she said.

Ms Arroyo urged governments, nongovernment and religious groups to harness people to engage in volunteer activities such as working to preserve the environment, helping in waste management efforts, planting trees and sharing food with the poor.

"Remember, you give their rice (the food) to the poor. We can teach old people who cannot read how to read. Let's count our blessing. There is no crisis in the Philippines yet," Ms Arroyo said.

Gov. Amado Espino Jr. said the provincial government would heed the order of the President in hiring workers. He said the provincial government had been hiring more workers since the start of the repair and construction of government buildings.

He said he would implement measures to save electricity like the reduce of air conditioning units from seven to 1 p.m.

"We have just put lights around the capitol compound. That entails (electricity consumption), but it will help outdoors enjoy their strolls at the compound. They can forget their problems while strolling. Which are we going to prioritize there? Savings or the enjoyment of the people?" he said.

Summer jobs

Sixteen-year-old Mary Ann Estoconia, a senior student from the Leyte National High School, is planning her budget on getting a summer job so she could proceed to college in June.

Estoconia was among the hundreds of students and out-of-school youths who have enlisted for the Tacloban City government's Special Program for Employment of Students (SPES) and the Youth Appreciation Program (YAP).

The summer jobs program is open to students or out-of-school youths from 15 to 25 years old who are residents of Tacloban. Those who will qualify will work for 22 days.

"I hope I can be accepted. My father does not have enough income to send me and my three other siblings to school. I want to finish college and eventually find a job of my own and help my family," said Estoconia, who will graduate from the Leyte National High School on Monday.

Starting this week, the city government has been accepting applications from students and out-of-school youths for the one-summer job program. *Yolanda Stella Arguelles Northern Luzon, with a report from Amy Galindez, Inquirer Visayas*

S. Mindanao reels from transmission tower bombing

COTABATO CITY—SOUTH-ern Mindanao continues to suffer from outages as a result of a bomb attack on a power transmission tower in Kabacan, North Cotabato, an official of an agency maintaining the towers said.

Emmanuel Abellanosa, National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP)'s head in Mindanao, said that except for the Kibawe-Maling, repair of the lines had already been finished.

Strong winds and heavy rains toppled eight structures in Balindong, Kibawe, Bukidnon, resulting in the tripping of the Kibawe-Davao 138-kilovolt (kV) transmission line No. 1 at around 8:50 p.m. on March 28.

The power load from the Kibawe-Davao Line No. 1 was immediately transferred to the parallel line No. 2, restoring supply at 10:38 p.m. to Davao City, the Davao provinces, Cotabato City, portions of Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao and parts of North Cotabato.

But disturbance and the Kibawe-Davao Line No. 2 alone could not sustain power delivery to southeastern and southwestern Mindanao when consumption soared to peak past 9 a.m. on Monday.

NGCP Line No. 2 eventually tripped at about 10 a.m. Marching stumbling in a brief blackout in the Mindanao power grid. Line No. 2 was restored 21 minutes later.

Line No. 1 remains out due to the eight toppled towers.

Davao and the nearby cities and provinces got its power back through the Kibawe-Davao Line No. 2 on a limited underexposure overloading.

Operations of NGCP substations in the Davao area returned to normal by 11:30 a.m. Monday. Davao Light Power Corp. operated its plant to compensate for the deficiency in supply.

In Southern Mindanao, restoration of power supply from the Kibawe-Davao Line No. 2 was delayed in General Santos, Koronadal, Cotabato and Tacurong cities, and in South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani provinces of South Cotabato, and Maguindanao due to a technical problem at NGCP's Calinan substation.

In this city, power has been restored by the Absista owned Cotabato Light and Power Co. since 6 a.m. Monday. *Julkipli U. Wadi, Inquirer Mindanao*

Traders face taxes for 2009 growth

BAGUIO CITY—THE COUNTRY's top economic managers informed Luzon businessmen that they would be taxed heavily this year in exchange for a potential growth of 3.7-4.4 percent in the gross national domestic product.

Only two million taxpayers subsidize the rest of about 90 million Filipinos today, forcing the government to stick to controversial forms of revenue generation, such as the expanded value-added tax (EVAT), said Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ralph Recto.

Recto was here last week as part of a team that laid an economic briefing for businessmen and officials in Northern Luzon.

It is still the poor and the middle class who benefit from the EVAT, which is paid by the rich who consume more, Recto said.

The former senator said he and his wife, Batangas Gov. Vilma Santos, own four vehicles that are heavily levied through EVAT for gasoline consumption.

"My children also do not go to public schools, so they don't benefit from VAT like other school children's... You [businessmen] are helping the poor," he said.

Rex Proserve Secretary Margarito Teves said the country's economic managers were already "very sensitive" to underlying how the public is being affected during the global recession, hoping for signs that they would support changes in Malacañang's policies on population management, strategic corporate organization and climate change.

Unabated population growth has for many serious implications on government's lean by the financial crisis, he said. This is because vital resources are depleted each year the population grows by 1.8 million Filipinos.

He said the Catholic Church "has tremendous influence in the thinking processes of policymakers."

During a media forum, Teves said people should change their traditional thinking because of the lingering sense of uncertainty over the recession hitting the country's major trading partners, like Japan and the United States.

He said he hoped the crisis would help change even the Church's mind.

But he said he had not yet raised this line of discussion with President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Ms Arroyo, in earlier reports, said she was reluctantly going to the Church's interpretation of population management, which promotes abstinence instead of safe sex methods.

Teves said it would take a "critical mass" to push for changes in government programs for reproductive health. "I will do not see that critical mass [building up] to support [the pending reproductive health measure] in Congress," he said.

He said he did not want lobbies for reproductive health to be held linked to the same way it opposed to gasoline price increases in 2008.

He said the public can direct travel when the Philippines was affected by increases in food and oil prices in 2008.

"But now that gasoline prices are down, I do not know how many [will save gas]. I think many have returned to their old habits," he said. *Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

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Aplus METRO
Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

Another 'shabu' lab raided

'Kitchen-type' facility in QC yields ₱40M drugs

By Tarra V. Quismundo

ANTIDRUG AGENTS YESTERDAY seized up to ₱40 million worth of suspected "shabu" (methamphetamine hydrochloride) from an apartment in Quezon City which had allegedly been turned into a drug laboratory.

The operation was the third to be conducted by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and the police within four days on "kitchen-type" shabu laboratories after last week's raids on a house in Cainta, Rizal, and a room in a building in Sta. Cruz, Manila.

PDEA said all three drug laboratories were allegedly run by the "Tiger Group" of the Chinese Triad, one of several drug cells believed to be operating in the Philippines, mainlined Chinese, Hong Kong and Macau.

Aside from ₱40 million worth of shabu laboratory equipment and chemicals, the agency also confiscated 4 kilograms of shabu, 2 kilograms of ecstasy and 1 kilogram of ketamine, all with a combined street value of ₱40 million, during the raid on the apartment unit in Barangay Kamuning.

Police arrested 3 Chinese nationals and 2 Filipinos during the raid.

Read more on Page A-20

A PDEA chemist inspects several containers of chemicals which were seized during a drug raid in Tatalon Village, Quezon City. MARIANNE BERMUDEZ

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Drunk Korean kicks girl, ends up in jail

By Jeannette I. Andrade

FOR KICKING an eight-year-old girl while in a drunken rage, a Korean man ended up in jail in Taguig, Manila, on Wednesday night.

Reports from the Manila Police District Women's and Children's Protection Desk said the victim sustained bruises on her nose and after Kim Tae Kyu, 40, a tourist staying at the Casablanca Hotel in Ermita, kicked her several times.

Before that, the victim, her mother and three other relatives were eating at the Turk's Burger fast food restaurant at the corner of Adriatico and Nakar Streets when Kim, who was drinking with his friends at a nearby table, approached them.

Kim then grabbed the girl's fork and poked the hand on her plate with it.

When the victims complained, the Korean reportedly went into a rage. He kicked the girl several times while shouting, prompting the victim's mother to seek assistance from a nearby police station.

When asked about the incident, Kim denied he kicked the child although he admitted that he did poke the girl's hand with a fork.

The Korean remains in detention pending the filing of child abuse charges against him.

A RESIDENT in Muntinlupa City tries to salvage what he can from his house, one of seven which were razed in a fire that hit the area. ARNOLD ALMACEN

Girl, 8, dies in Munti fire

By Alison W. Lopez

AN 8-YEAR-OLD GIRL was killed in a fire that razed 100 shanties in Purok 2, Bayanan, Muntinlupa City, yesterday.

SFO1 Rodolfo Vasquez of the Muntinlupa Fire Department said the body of Judy Mylen was found in her family's house as rescued it in ash.

About 200 families lost their homes in the fire which began in the Malinis' house a few minutes after midnight.

Vasquez said the blaze quickly spread because the structures in the area were made of light materials.

The damage to property was estimated at P5 million.

Church, local officials express concern over controversial draft ordinance

By Erika Sauler

CITING THE LACK OF CONSULTATION, members of the Archdiocese of Manila met yesterday with City Council presiding officer Hon. Ma. Theresa Fernandez "Tessa" Hemedes to seek the postponement of the passing on third reading of a draft ordinance amending the city's zoning plan.

The Parish Pastoral Council, the Mother of Perpetual Help Parish in Paco, Sta. Ana, and Bishop Broderick Pabillo also wrote Hemedes to make the same request, saying there was a need for more widespread consultations.

Meanwhile, the provisions of Baptist Perola Bris, Asst.—as organizer of barangay officials in the area—denied an earlier report that they support the measure which would allow resthouses and heavy industries to operate in Manila.

Barangay councilors and members of the Archdiocese Ministry on Ecology led by Lou Amanto also talked to Councilor Adora Bris, author of Draft Ordinance No. 7177 which was scheduled for third reading yesterday.

The council, however, adjourned early due to the lack of a quorum.

"We are also for employment, but considering the environmental situation of Manila which is already polluted and congested, why would you open it up to heavy industries? If they [councilors] went jobs, there are less pollutive industries," Amanto told the legislator.

For his part, Domagoso assured the group that the proposed ordinance was only aimed at allowing existing companies to continue operating in the city.

He added that the measure was in response to the request of barangay officials in Pasig, Sta. Ana, to allow Philnico (Philippine Klinik Co.) Industries Inc. to remain in the area.

However, Rebelo Danay, one of the barangay leaders in the area, said he and his constituents were not in favor of the measure although they did lobby for Philnico's continued operations.

He added that they were surprised when it was announced during a council committee meeting that they were supportive of the proposed ordinance.

Amanto, meanwhile, noted that there was nothing in the measure that would bar new industries from operating in the city. Domagoso, however, assured them that the city government would not allow new medium and heavy industries to come into the city.

Kim's draft ordinance has been described by councilors opposed to its approval as a ploy to allow the "big 3" oil companies (Shell, Petron and Chevron) to long-set operating the Pandacan oil depot.

In 2007, the Supreme Court ordered then Mayor Lito Atienza to relocate the oil depot based on the city council-approved Ordinance 8027 which reclassified several areas to Residential and Parks Use, from Industrial use or commercial.

Accused tells judge: I want my e-card

By Julie M. Aurelio

ONE OF THE ACCUSED IN THE 2007 Paterson blast has asked a Quezon City court to allow him to withdraw money from his Government Service Insurance System e-card for his family's expenses.

In a three-page motion filed on March 12, Tomlee Jimmy Antal said he has several children of school age and that he was in "dire need of financial resources to feed them."

Antal, who is detained at the Bicutan Manila District Jail in Taguig City, was busted charged with murder for the 2007 explosion at the House of Representatives which killed several people, among them Basilan Rep. Wahab Akbar.

In his motion, which was filed at the side of Judge Rodolfo Ure of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 83, Antal asked the court to allow him to use the e-card or at least authorize a representative to withdraw money from it.

"Accused who continues to be in detention but who has a pending petition for [bail] has to feed the children of several children of school age and it is dire need of financial means to feed them and support their education," he said in his motion.

Antal added that it would be up to the court to set the terms and conditions for the release and withdrawal of the money.

According to him, his e-card was in the possession of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group or the state prosecutors in charge of the case.

Antal's motion, however, ordered the CIDG to turn over the e-card, marked as exhibit "L-1" to Bataan clerk of court Raul Rosquillo.

"The said card will not be released to the accused unless he executes an undertaking that he will produce the said card when needed by the court," Lee said.

From page A-19

PDEA records showed that the Chinese national was arrested and charged with drugs in San Juan in 2002, although he was eventually released.

"Our target here was also Cai. But he was arrested in Cebu. So it means [the two labs] are interconnected," Santiago said.

National Capital Region Police Office chief, Director Leopoldo Bataoil, told the reporters that Cai was a "high-value" chemist who regularly maintained the triad's laboratories in the Philippines and made sure that these produced only quality shabu.

DID YOU KNOW

THE LATE Fernando Poe Jr., National Artist for Theater and Literature, was born on March 5, 1917 in Tondo, Manila. He was a director, actor, playwright and poet.

Poe was proclaimed National Artist in December 1991, three months after his death.

Cyril J. Jacalaren, Inquirer Research

METROBRIEFS

Lead on kidnapped baby

A WEEK after a 26-year-old pawnbroker reportedly had her newborn baby girl taken from her in an extra-judicial rite, the police were following up a lead from an informant. Manila Police District Women's and Children's Protection Desk (WCPD) head, Chief Insp. Anita Angulo, told the Inquirer yesterday that the lipstick saleswoman did not identify Cano from information about the woman's whereabouts. Angulo said the informant told them she got one of the suspects with a new-born baby when could be Janet Bascos's missing daughter. "He is the informant asked where the baby was born and the suspect said they took the baby from a hospital in San Juan," Angulo said. Based on the tipster's information, the police was spotted with the suspect several days after Bascos gave birth. The informant also said the suspects seemed to be avoiding publicity. Jeannette I. Andrade

French tourist loses bag

A FRENCH tourist claimed she lost some P10,000 worth of cash and electronic gadgets while on board the Light Rail Transit in Manila on Monday. Jean-Pierre Noirmont-Pontroue, 61, told the police yesterday that she lost a small bag containing a digital camera worth P15,000, a P5,000 leather wallet, 300 Euros and other personal belongings. PO2 Reginald Delos Reyes of the Manila Police District said Pontroue told on the LRT with three other French tourists. "They said they rode the train but they suspected someone of what place. They probably just wanted to tour Manila aboard the train." While on board the train, Pontroue discovered that someone had taken her bag. She reported the theft to LRT security personnel but they failed to find her valuables. Jeannette I. Andrade

Alphas Exemplar Awards set

THE ALPHA Phi Beta Fraternity of the UP College of Law will give an Alphas Exemplar Award to 10 outstanding Alphans of the decade of the 60s today, 6:30 p.m., at the Gabaldon Room of Dah Filipino. The 10 awardees are retiree Justice Abraham Sarmiento, former UP Law Dean Pacifico Ballentongan, former Pangasinan Gov. Agerico Aglipay Jr., former Senator and Comelec Chair Leonardo Perez, former Bayan Muna Rep. Rodolfo Valentin, former Rizal Prosecutor Mauro Castro, former Human Rights Commissioner Jorge Coquia and lawyers Ernesto Salas, Simeon de Castillo and Felipe Calderon. The award is part of the celebrations of the fraternity's 75th year anniversary. For more information, please call Sherill at 4435446.

UHSM anniversary set

CALLING all alumni of the Union High School of Manila. It will celebrate its 90th anniversary on Oct. 18 this year. Please get in touch with your batchmates or classmates for updates or contact Neni Luna, chair of the anniversary committee, at 0917-620-1211 or e-mail magnolia_1121@yahoo.com for details.

DOWN, GUYS, DOWN
Members of the Manila Police District take part in their annual physical fitness test held at Rizal Park. ALVIN KASIBA

Suspension of cops in Edsa shootout railroaded?

By Alison W. Lopez

THE 90-DAY PREVENTIVE SUSPENSION order on the 29 cops involved in the Edsa shootout case was "railroaded," the Public Attorney's Office claimed yesterday.

PAO chief Persida Rueda-Acosta, who represents the accused officers, said due process was not observed in the issuance of the preventive suspension since the 29 suspected cops were not furnished with the motion.

Sr. Insp. Vince Bautchista, the cops' lawyer, added that the motion for preventive suspension dated at the preliminary conference yesterday lacked a stamped receipt—indicating that it did not undergo the "usual process."

"Using these developments, we will file a supplemental motion to declare the preventive suspension order null... and void in these days," Bautchista said.

Prosecution lawyer Owen de Luna, however, said they believed the suspension was only necessary to prevent the accused from harassment when they testify against the cops.

On Feb. 27, the Napoleonic-related 29 officers from the Quezon City Police District and the National Capital Region Highway Patrol Group suspended for the Feb. 17 shooting incident on Edsa that left three suspected car thieves dead.

Wanted Navotas drug pusher falls

By Beverly T. Mendrigal

NAVOTAS CITY'S "TOP DRUG PUSHER IN TOWN" is behind the bands of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) over the weekend.

PDEA Director General Dionisio Santiago informed Mayor John Rey Tiangco about the arrest of Clarence Antonio "Jerry" Bolalin during the signing of a memorandum of agreement between the agency and the city government on the latter date.

Santiago said Bolalin was arrested in a buy-bust operation on March 21 in Bulua, Tondo.

Bolalin, a resident of Barangay Tangos in Navotas, has long been in the PDEA's watch list for his alleged drug pushing activities in the city.

Dir. Santiago, he was arrested for selling about five grams of shabu to PDEA agents who have seized another five grams of the drug from him.

Tiangco said in a statement that they signed a MOA with PDEA to intensify the city government's drug abuse prevention programs in cooperation with the agency.

"This is a strong warning to all drug pushers and users that plan to operate here in our town. We will apply the full force of the law against you," he added.

Another 'shabu' lab raided

of shabu, yesterday's raid on an apartment at 192 Cabatbat St., Tejeros Village, Quezon City, yielded laboratory equipment and raw materials for manufacturing drugs.

The operation was a follow-up to the arrest of Chinese national Cai Shu, an alleged "master chemist," and two other men in a two-story house in Cainta on Friday.

On the other hand, Saturday's raid on Room 403 of Building 725 on T. Alonzo Street, Sta. Cruz, Manila, was prompted by the confession of Victor Chu, another suspected drug chemist tagged as a member of the Tiger Group who was arrested earlier this month.

Both operations yielded P326 million worth of shabu and various equipment used in making drugs.

"The groups [in Cainta, Sta. Cruz and Quezon City] are interconnected. You'll see that they have small production—around three to five kilos a day. But if you put together their production in one month, it's a big volume and the drug problem in the country will not stop," PDEA Director General Dionisio Santiago told reporters yesterday.

"We expect that after this, we will have another crisis in the supply of shabu. But the crisis will be temporary if the public won't help us," he added.

Found on the upper floor of the apartment in Quezon City were several three to five kilos of crystalline substance believed to be shabu and raw materials used in producing the illegal drug, including liquid methamphetamine, 30kg Vit Layer, PDEA Complaint and Narcotics Unit chief, said.

Also seized were thousand containers, laboratory equipment and several amber-colored bottles without labels, needles and cans of beer/game which were stored in kitchen cupboards.

Virginia Gregorio, an official of the village, told reporters that residents and security guards in the area did not notice anything unusual going on in the apartments.

"The village is quiet, we can see many people pass through the streets. And if a vehicle has a village sticker, it's allowed to pass through," said Gregorio.

Cai was arrested after a month-long surveillance operations showed that Cai was also involved in running the shabu laboratory in Quezon City.

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Quirico

A THAI fireman (left) dressed as comic book character Spider-Man carries a boy from a balcony at a special needs school in Bangkok. —

'Spider-Man' rescues autistic Thai school boy

BANGKOK—A THAI FIREMAN named superhero when he donned up as comic book character Spider-Man to woo a frightened 9-year-old boy from a balcony, police said on Tuesday.

Teachers in a special needs school in Bangkok alerted firefighters on Monday when an autistic pupil, scared of attending his first day at school, ran out on the third-floor ledge and refused to come inside, a police sergeant told AFP.

Police members' efforts to beckon the boy inside, he confirmed to budge until his another mentioned her worst fear of superheroes, prompting fireman Somchai Yoosabai to make a novel approach to the problem.

The rescuer climbed back to his fire station and made a quick change into a Spider-Man costume before returning to the boy, he said.

"I told him Spider-Man is here to rescue you, so monsters are going to attack you and I told him to walk slowly towards me as running could be dangerous," Somchai told local television.

The young boy immediately stood up and walked into his rescuer's arms, police said. AFP

South Africa bars Dalai Lama from attending peace confab

Nobel Prize winners to boycott conference

JOHANNESBURG—South Africa barred the Dalai Lama from a peace conference in Johannesburg this week, hoping to keep good relations with trading partner China but instead generating a storm of criticism.

Nobel peace conference was organized by South African activists officials to highlight the Red World Cup to be held in Africa, which South Africa will host in 2010.

But because the Dalai Lama isn't being allowed to attend, it is now being boycotted by fellow Nobel Peace prize winners archbishop Desmond Tutu and former president F.W. de Klerk, as well as members of the Nobel Committee.

"It is disappointing that South Africa, which has received so much solidarity from the world, doesn't want to give that solidarity to others," Nobel Institute Director Geir Lundestad told The Associated Press in Oslo, referring to the decades-long fight against apartheid.

An eclectic mix of Nobel laureates, Hollywood celebrities and other dignitaries are coming to discuss issues ranging from confronting racism to how sports can unify people and nations.

But Trudy Meintjes, spokesperson for President Kgalema Motlanthe, said a high-profile visit by the Tibetan spiritual leader would have distracted from the conference's focus.

"South Africa would have been the source of negative publicity about China," he said Monday. "We do value our relationship with China."

South Africa is China's largest trading partner as it continues to which China is heavily and increasingly involved.

Tsam Tshetsu, a spokesperson for Tutu, told the AP that Tutu would not protest "because of the Dalai Lama issue." Tutu was spurred Sunday at calling the leaving "disgraceful."

"[South Africa] should admit anyone with a legitimate and peaceful interest and should not take political decisions on who should, and who should not, attend," de Klerk said Monday, announcing he also would skip the conference.

The Norwegian government said it "regrets" the South African decision, and was considering whether to withdraw.

However, the South African Communist Party backed the move, saying March was a particularly sensitive time for a visit.

Last week marked the one-year anniversary of anti-government riots in Lhasa, Tibet's capital, and 50 years since the Dalai Lama escaped into exile in India after Chinese troops crushed a Tibetan uprising.

China claims Tibet is part of its territory, but many Tibetans say Chinese rule deprives them of religious freedom and autonomy. Beijing accuses the Dalai Lama of pushing for Tibetan independence and denounces anti-Chinese protests.

South Africa decided last month to refuse to issue an official invitation, without which, Meintjes said, the Dalai Lama cannot visit.

Meintjes said the spiritual leader had been welcomed twice previously in South Africa and would be welcome again in the future—but "not now, when the whole world is looking at South Africa." AP

DALAI LAMA —

WORLD BRIEFS

Mumbai attack trial begins

MUMBAI—Courtroom breaking into laughter, the man accused of being the lone surviving gunman in last year's Mumbai attacks told an Indian court on Monday that he was from Pakistan and wanted legal assistance, officials said. The trial of Mohammad Ajmal Kasab, whose prison he made changed in February with "waging war" against India, began on Monday via a video link with the prison in Mumbai. Some wrestled 166 people in a three-day campaign in the city last November. Reuters

Journalists suspected spies

SEOUL—Two American journalists detained in North Korea's border with China are under investigation by North Korean military intelligence officers who suspect they were engaged in espionage activities, a report said on Tuesday. Senior Korean said in two the guards arrested Laura Ling and Euna Lee, reporters for for their Viva President Al Gore's San Francisco-based media outlet Current TV. AP

Hutu convicted for killings

THE HAGUE—A Hutu man was convicted and sentenced to 25 years in prison on Monday for the slaying of two Tutsi mothers and dressed their other children during Rwanda's 1994 genocide. The Hague District Court said there was circumstantial evidence that Joseph Mpambara ordered the two Tutsi mothers and their children hunted down in an ambulance they were using to flee violence, and then killed. They were bludgeoned and hacked with clubs and machetes. AP

Teen charged in cop slay

DUBLIN—Two Boys missed detectives charged in an Catholic teenager on Monday with murder—in a policeman—The first charge stemming from two deaths just attacks by Irish Republican Army dissidents this month that ended the country's peace process. The 17-year-old boy was arrested the day after the March 9 killing of Constable Stephen Carroll, 48, in another claimed by a splinter group called the Continuity IRA. AP

$2M for Mexican drug lords

MEXICO CITY—Mexico's government on Monday offered up $2 million each for information leading to the arrest of 24 top drug lords in a public challenge to the cartels' violent grip on the country. The list included Beltrán Leyva gang members who are in control of territory under pressure from the US and Mexican governments. The two most powerful gangs—the Pacific and Gulf cartels—each suffered has been that have given rise to their conflict, according to World published by the Attorney General's Office. AP

Bomb kills Fatah official

SIDON—A bomb killed a senior official in the Palestinian Fatah faction and four other people in southern Lebanon on Monday, security sources said. Kamal Medhat, deputy head of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Lebanon, was killed with his companions in a car near near Ain Hilweh refugee camp outside the southern city of Sidon. The bomb, hidden under a wooden crate, hurled one car off the road into a nearby orchard. Another car plunged into what appeared to be a corpse left by the blast. Reuters

Bank rescue: Wall Street likes it, but will it work?

NEW YORK—WALL STREET gave the new bank rescue plan an enthusiastic endorsement. Whether it will actually work is another matter. Investors returning banking and oil—financially lifting the economy out of recession—is the big question.

One big question is economists than stumped the last administration. How to determine a price for the thicket of mortgage-related securities or banks can move them off their books and then ramp up lending to consumers and businesses.

And even more optimistic analysts "Will the banking angst over Wall Street bailouts and bonuses lead Congress to impose harsh restrictions on would-be buyers of toxic assets, making them try even from driving a deal?

The new program announced on Monday by Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner aims to entice investors to buy up to a half-trillion dollars of bad assets, to clean up banks' capital, and unlock credit. The program could later be expanded to $1 trillion.

Among the investors who endorsed it was Bill Gross, a respected bond manager and founder of the Pimco investment firm. Gross said Pimco, which has more than $760 billion in client assets, would start buying mortgage-related securities as soon as the plan. He said it would help the economy "avoid the Japanese-related pitfall" for their hard-to-solve woes.

"It's a better way than to keep pumping equity in," Pimco said. The downturn Pimco.

Wall Street responded with its best day of 2009, sending the Dow Jones industrial average soaring almost 500 points, a rally of almost 7 percent. AP

BEACHED Dead pilot whales are seen on a beach after they became stranded in Hardie Bay, West Australia in this handout picture taken on March 21. More than 70 whales and dolphins died on Monday, local media reported. REUTERS

Deadly FedEx cargo plane crash probed

TOKYO—INVESTIGATORS

landed more charred wreckage and plane began to haul again on Tuesday morning on the main runway of Japan's largest international airport, where a the earlier a FedEx cargo flight crashed and exploded, killing its two pilots.

About 170 workers labored on Monday night under giant construction lights to clean up the scene and remove the remnants of the left-13 cargo plane, pieces of which were put onto large flatbed trucks and moved to a spot about 300 meters away for investigators.

The runway was declared fit for use by airport officials and officially reopened at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday.

The plane's "black box" data recorder and cockpit voice recorders have been recovered and the data source to be usable, according to Transport Ministry spokesperson Michihiko Ohashi. Officials from the US National Transportation Safety Board were expected to arrive in Tokyo via Tuesday afternoon to assist in the investigation, he said.

A team of officials from FedEx Corp. landed in Tokyo on Tuesday to investigate take part in the investigation. AP

Iraq suicide bomber kills 25 at funeral

NIGARHANIYA, IRAQ—A U.S. city bombed three funerals' go at a Kurdish funeral in the volatile and ethnically mixed countryside of Diyala in northern Iraq on Monday, killing 25 people and wounding 45, police said.

The bombing in the town of Jalawla, 115 kilometers northeast of Baghdad, highlighted the dangers lying still from Iraq militants, even as overall violence has fallen to levels not seen since mid-2003 and the United States prepares to withdraw combat troops by Aug. 31, 2010.

"We heard a huge explosion. We looked over at our neighbor's house and there were dead people everywhere," said Sabad Ahmed, a woman who flew over door to the house where the blast occurred.

Diyala is a melting pot of Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen mutually performing Sunni, Shiite, Christian and other faiths.

Tensions between Arabs and Kurds in the province has been rising, driven by disputes over oil and territory between Iraq's Shiite-Arab-led government in Baghdad and officials in the largely autonomous Kurdistan region.

Jalawla lies on the disputed border between Kurdistan and the rest of Iraq, and was one of several towns where there were standoffs between Iraqi central government forces and Kurdish Peshmerga fighters last year.

By bombing a Kurdish event, the militants could be trying to spark ethnic conflict between Arabs and Kurds, just as Sunni Islamist militants from al-Qaida provoked a conflict between Shiite and Sunni Arabs in 2006 and 2007 that was long-spent.

Under a deal between Baghdad and Kurdistan last year, the Peshmerga agreed to withdraw from Jalawla and let Iraqi forces take over. Each complains that security has worsened since then.

"When the Peshmerga were in Jalawla, the homicide could not attack civilians. If they were still there, they would not have happened," Ismail al-Hamachchi, a member of the Kurdish alliance in Baghdad's parliament, told Reuters. Reuters

MERALCO CHAMPIONS EARTH HOUR 2009

In line with its environmental conservation and preservation advocacies, the Manila Electric Company (Meralco) declared its full support for Earth Hour 2009, a global environmental campaign against global warming headed by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The cause calls for the massive switching off of lights throughout the country from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. on March 28, 2009. Meralco pledged to switch off all essential lights in the company's head office, business centers, extension offices and centers within the franchise area and help facilitate the monitoring of the simultaneous switch-off. Meralco also donated P100,000 to aid the campaign. Present in the assembly of the donation are (from left) Meralco SAVP and Marketing Programs Head Melinda P. Dayao, Meralco VP and Corporate Marketing Head Miguel L. Lopez, Meralco President and COO Jose P. de Jesus, WWF-Philippines Vice Chairman and CEO Jose Ma. Lorenzo Tan and Earth Hour National Director Nadeen Tiafio.

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SPORTS
Editor Teddyboy S. Molmisa • Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ochoa

■ Japan trips Korea, bags world title /A25

Beermen face skidding Gin Kings

KLASMAS' Yeng-nito Cruz of Alaska and San Miguel's Wesley Gonzales dispute possession in a recent game won by the Beermen. KJILA NICOLAS

By Mourey N. Castillo

MORE BAD NEWS FOR BARangay Ginebra.

Already reeling from two straight losses, the defending champion Gin Kings will be the decided underdogs when they go up against the league-leading San Miguel Beermen today in the Mobile PBA Fiesta Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

Gametime is 7:30 p.m. with the Beermen, who are displaying their best form in years, expected to extend their tournament-best winning streak to six.

Rain or Shine gave the 4-fourth straight victory earlier when the Elasto Painters used import Jai Lewis (see their first and lost in the Burger King Whopperz at 5 p.m.

The Painters have been emboldened ever since the tough Lewis arrived to replace Charles Clark. Rain or Shine is actually enjoying its finest start in six three years in the league.

"We have the perfect import, it seems," said Rain or Shine coach Coley Gavin. "Jai makes everyone in the team look good because he is unselfish. He also plays great defense."

The Gin Kings, tied for last place after one month of the season-ending tournament, continue to feel the absence of key players due to injury, including last year's leading scorer, Mark Caguioa, and Sunday Salvacion, this conference's leading point producer.

San Miguel, meanwhile, is going great guns with an import—Gabriel Freeman—who gets everyone involved. And the locals have also been playing well even if three of its starters, among them Mike Cortez and Denny Seigle, also sidelined by injuries.

Red Hendy Ginebra's import, is playing well. But the left-handed Brady can't seem to identify the holes he needs to plug with so many key men out of commission.

NCAA plans 10 teams for 2010

DOWN TO A SEVEN-SCHOOL CAST IN THE coming season, the National Collegiate Athletic Association is ready to accept applications as the country's oldest collegiate league tries to expand to more to 10.

Incoming NCAA president Fr. Mat de Jesus of Season-85 host San Beda said the league is allowing interested schools to turn in applications during the year.

The NCAA actually planned to accept one member for the coming season to replace PCU, which filed a leave of absence from the league but none of the four applicants couldn't get the required two-thirds vote.

Only FF Rojas

Top riders call for equestrian polls

By Jeanine W. Pays

OLYMPIAN TONI LEVISTE AND VETERAN RIDER JOSEY LANZA JOINED rally yesterday for the Equestrian Association of the Philippines, meeting ground of Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, to hold its school and election bite this month.

"Anyone not to see that the sport in the country is dying," said Lozano during the PSA Forum at the Malacañang Palace.

"There are no concrete programs initiated by the federation. I feel very concerned, I feel sad for the up-and-coming riders today. There is no direction taken by the present leadership."

Last week, equestrian president Cojuangco made a stunning announcement postponing the election to 2012. He had earlier set the polls on March 31.

Equestrian director and party-list Rep. Carlos Cuenca had facilitated plans to challenge Cojuangco for the presidency.

"They don't want an election now for the obvious reason that they're being challenged," she said. "What does that tell you? It tells you that somebody is afraid that he might lose his position."

Cuenca thinking plans to call for a special meeting and request that an election be held.

"We'll petition the board to call this meeting, one by laws provide for it," said Cuenca. "We have more than one-third of the general membership to ask for this election and we're going to do it.

"There are many casualties in this election. I would like to enhance all possible casualties before we take legal action."

Leviste said her coalition does not have anything to do with politics.

"It has everything to do with my concern and passion for the sport," said Leviste, the only Southeast Asian rider to compete in the Olympics, World Championships and World Cup Finals.

"We used to be the powerhouse of the equestrian sport in Southeast Asia. And now we're lagging behind. If we lag behind in Southeast Asia, what more in world-class competitions?"

"Change is inevitable, it has to happen for the good of the sport," said Lanza, a two-time SEA Games gold medalist.

Equestrian contributed a gold medal for the country during the 2005 Bacolod-Iloilo Games in honor of the POC chief's daughter Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski.

REP Carlos Cuenca (right) speaks to Jenni Lanza and Toni Leviste over an.

Pacquiao willing victim of ugly system

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Summer Football Festival: May 17, 8:00 am - 5:00 pm, Alabang Country Club fields.

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LOS ANGELES—SEATTLE MARINERS OUTFIELDER ICHIRO SUZUKI HIT a two-out, two-run single in the top of the 10th inning as defending champion Japan beat reigning Olympic champion South Korea, 5-3, Monday night to win its second straight World Baseball Classic title.

The Japanese were the inaugural tournament champions three years ago, beating Cuba, 10-6, in the finals in San Diego.

Before a boisterous crowd of 54,846 at Dodger Stadium, South Korea tied the game at 3-all Monday with two outs in the bottom of the ninth on Lee Bum-ho's run-scoring single off Japanese closer Yu Darvish (2-1), who got in trouble by issuing one-out walks to Hee Seop-choo and Kim Tae-kyun, the 3-4 hitters in the lineup.

Starting pitcher Chan Ho-park, who had allowed only one run in 5 2/3 innings, was lifted after Choo led off the 10th with a single and Lee Jong-wook sacrificed him to second.

Reliever Toshiaki Imae then intentionally walked Lee Seung-yeop to load the bases before Ichiro lined a 1-1 pitch into left field, with pinch runner Lee Jong-wook scoring easily from second.

Seibu Lions outfielder Akinori Iwamura opened the 10th with a single, was sacrificed to second and took third on a single by Akinori Iwamura. Hiroki Kokubo, Hideki Matsui's replacement in the lineup, was intentionally walked

So extends mastery over V'mayor

By Ray Lauro

DAVAO CITY—TOP SEEDED GRANDmaster Wesley So downed Rorg Villanueva last night to take the headcount in the Phoenix Petroleum Chess City "Battle of Grandmasters" at the Ocampo Resort and Hotel here.

The end came after 25 moves of a London Opening with So threatening mate with his queen and rook in three moves.

So, winner of the first Battle of GMs in Manila last year, cornered his superseasoned Villanueva, who now has lost three times in four games in the country's top player.

Grandmaster Eugene Torre and International Master Rolando Nolte fought to a draw in the first completed match of the 12-round tournament that makes P900,000 in prizes.

Torre, winner of last year's GMA Cup, and Nolte agreed to a move after 26 moves of a Grunfeld Slav, with both players having two passers each and opposite-colored bishops.

Still being played at presstime were the games pitting GM Rogelio Antonio Jr. against IM John Catalino Gochuico, GM Darwin Laylo against IM Richard Bitoon, GM John Paul Gomez against GM Joyce Gonzales and GM Mark Paragua against IM Richard Bitoon, winner of last year's Singapore Open.

In women's play, Akiane Shelly and Shercille Cua also settled for a draw after 34 moves of another Slav.

Still undefeated were the matches between WFM Lucelly Cabico and WFM Cleo Lenel Bernales, Hida Young and Nikonara Pile Mastercatherine Wenona, WIM Beverly Mendoza and WFM Jan Jodilyn Fronda, WFM Judy Flores and WFM Jedara Dianna and WFM Daisy Rivera and Kimberly Jane Canonan.

To lessen the number of draws, a scoring innovation is being introduced in the event with a win worth 2 points, a draw 1 and a loss 0.

In case of a stalemate, the player who forces the draw gets 1.5 points with the undefeated player getting 0.5 points.

The men's division champion pockets P500,000 plus trophy while the girl's division winner receives P60,000 plus trophy.

Rounds one and three will be played today at 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., respectively.

Former Davao city mayor congressman Rodrigo Duterte declared the tournament open while Phil Inconvey president Florencio Campomanes gave the inspirational speech.

Also present were Ospitan Mayor Bonifacio Jalosjos Jr., board member Shalee Jalosjos, Vice Mayor Paul Duaso and Amadeo Hina, chess commissioner of the sponsoring Phoenix Petroleum.

SO: In just 25 moves

Quick wins highlight Abap Visayas tourney

BANAHAW, LEYTE—SIX OF the eight boys entered in the division at stake with Northern Samar and Cebu here pouring out shutout wins each in the 1st Visayas Abap Area amateur boxing tournament Monday at the Banaaga Municipal gym here.

Mel Dyan Umap of Northern Samar scored a third round referee-stopped-contest-out-thousand win over Rolnel's Dolos Balaba while Michael Duazo needed just a round to pre-sweep Dimsa's Jerald Cadenito in the Youth Boys (48 kg) class.

Notching quick wins for Cebu in the nine division were Anthony Sabalde, who caused Asher Gilles of Ormoc with an RSC-O win; Dino Amorit over Rodel Ybe who stopped Antonio Genang of San Carlos City.

Eugen Ladon of Bago halted Alexander Morales of Ormoc in the first round with a solid shot to the body in the Junior Boys (38.5-40 kg) category while Ibañez, Bagnalon vs. Pabalinas needed only three rounds to oust Raul Barong of Bohol to another Youth Boys bout.

Cebu A won four bouts with Jack Tejano outpointing Md Ali of Cebu B in the Youth Boys class and Jehvark Dignas beating Regie Ojo's Chobits Alabado in the Boys 37-38.5 kg.

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6 Illam nines in semis

Pitcher Diaz plays hero as Manilans outlast Aussies

By Cedell P Tupas

PITCHER INES DIAZ MADE THE BIGGEST PLAYS ON BOTH ends as defending champion International Little League of Manila-1 survived Perth, 14-13, yesterday to complete a sweep of the Girls' Major division preliminary round in the Southeast Asian Youth Baseball and Softball Tournament at the Ateneo grounds in Quezon City.

Manila-1 scored seven runs in the last two innings with Diaz, a veteran of the same tournament in Singapore last year, who studies at the International School, blasting a two-run shot off Antonette Alaughan at the top of the seventh frame to send home Arlis Mendoza and give the Manilans a 14-10 edge.

Diaz returned in the second and gave up three runs before settling on three Wells to end the Aussies' resistance and seal Manila-1's third straight victory.

The win also secured the No. 1 seed for Manila-1 in the semifinals where it will play Manila-2 which yielded the No. 2 seed to Singapore following its 6-1 win.

The other Elam teams also clinched berths in the semifinals in this weeklong event sponsored by the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Mister Donut, Tokyo Tokyo, RFC, Gatorade, Pepsi, Poldent Bank, Sta. Lucia Realty, STI, Knights Capital, Pioneer Insurance, Liberty Telecom, Adidas, Alaska Milk, K-9, Fratilio Jewellers and PLDT.

Manila-2 overcame Perth, 21-15, to claim a third straight win and at least the No. 2 spot in the Boys' Minor division, while Manila-1 kept its hopes alive of advancing by whipping Bangkok, 6-4.

Also in a solid position to reach the next round is the Manila Boys' Senior team, which squashed past Perth, 19-4, for its second win in three outings late Monday.

The two Manila teams in the Girls' Senior division could end up with the top two berths to-

Busy summer for RP U-16 five

By Cedell P Tupas

A HECTIC SUMMER BECKONS FOR THE 16-Nokia Tao Cup, Under-16 team which is hoping to make an impact in the Fiba-Asia championship late this year.

Unable to train together extensively because of their school commitments, seven here of the team hope to toughen up in April with a training program that will include a stint in Canberra, Australia.

"It's only now that we're starting serious training because our practices have been irregular since the players are in school," coach Jong Uichico said during the monthly PSA Forum at Shakey's Gil Puyat branch.

Training coaches in Cagayan de Oro and Cebu have also been fired up for the Under-16 squad, before the players attend the Nike Elite Camp early next month.

The Australia camp, which will also include exhibition games against top-notch teams there, is scheduled from April 15 to 25, added Abarrientos, who was joined by coaching staff members Joey Guanio and Mon Jose and Secretary Undersecretary Philippine Olympic Committee Bernie Adeniu.

The RP quintet, led by Kiefer Ravena and Ray Parks, is preparing for the Fiba-Asia tournament in Malaysia this November.

Nokia Corporate Communications Manager Nikko Sagpaa Abas said Tao Corp's bid to be televised the support of Pinkis and Tao Corp to the team.

POC opens door to 2 Olympians

NATIONAL ATHLETES WILL SOON HAVE A voice in the Philippine Olympic Committee.

The Olympic body is setting the stage for the creation of an athletes' commission which will look into the grievances of RP bets and inform them of first-hand information on crucial POC decisions and policies.

POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco Jr. said the formation of an athletes commission, which would be tackled in today's POC general assembly at the Manila Golf and Country Club, is in compliance with the directive of the International Olympic Committee.

Cojuangco said two Olympians from the last two editions of the Olympics will represent the athletes in the general assembly. Asec Harnarez

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Editor Raul D. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Carrie S. Nuriana
BUSINESS

IMF to scale down growth outlook for RP

Global recession to be deeper than earlier expected

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND IS SCALING down its growth outlook for the Philippines this year, noting that recent projections that the global economy could contract in 2009 for the first time in 60 years were underestimated.

The IMF has lowered further its global outlook and now sees the world economy contracting by 0.5 to 1 percent this year, a reversal of its previous forecast of a 0.5-percent expansion and the much earlier projection of a 2.2-percent growth.

The latest world economic outlook came after the United States and other advanced economies showed signs they would likely contract by a bigger than earlier expected, the IMF said.

Realizing that the impact of the recession stimulus packages prepared by the governments of the United States

>>> B2

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CAPTIVA FULLY-LOADED

Tight-knit but tight-lipped

Biz Buzz
By the staff

THE DECISION OF THE LOPEZ FAMILY OR AT least the Oscar Lopez side of it, to drastically reduce its stake in Meralco may not be seen at all. In fact, the Lopez patriarch could have handed it to his senior sons three six years ago.

On a Dec. 15, 2002, stockholders' meeting in Intramuros, Oscar said the group was likely to give up its power distribution business and instead focus on power generation. This was around the same time the Lopez new generation was toying with the idea of selling Manila North Tollways Corp., which MVP's Metro Pacific group now controls.

"We've been told that [we will be] being] 'bilateral to three IOUs instead of Meralco, since we're down to 1.9 [percent]," Oscar had said then. "There's a possibility that we may just focus on generation and leave distribution out. But we have to solve some problems in Meralco first."

When the story was published two days later, Meralco chief Manuel "Manolo" Lopez readily denied it, saying there were no plans at all to sell out of Meralco. Apparently, the lack of clarity on the issue caused due possibly by below.

Fast forward to March 2009. First Philippine Holdings Corp. sold its 20-percent stake in Meralco to, you guessed, another MVP company—Philippine Telephone Corp. Again, it was the Oscar side of the family who sold the shares—specifically non-Fonkerton and Benjamin. And again, Manolo was kept out of the loop, finding out about the deal only when the agreement had already been finalized and was ready for signing.

Interim dear to the family say the "generation gap" between brothers Oscar and Eduardo (Oscar is almost 15 years Eduardo's senior) is no pronounced that they don't see eye to eye on a lot of things. Neither do they engage in "real" discussions. Quite a sad revelation for a supposedly tight-knit family that has shown it can weather all the scrapes of scandals. Sadder still, the reasons they have threatened in the past seem to be so much for their strongest of adversaries yet—themselves. —Abigail L. Ho

Last dance

COMMENDABLE may sound Manila every day Thursday, employees of Philippine Stock Exchange Inc. find their doors locked up in their offices or locked in the boardroom to start the company's new plan of action. Monday last week, Meralco employees witnessed their top executives—including new kid on the block Ferdinand Constantino, the new CFO from the San Miguel group—dance to the tune of Philip Oakey's 1980s anthem "Together in Electric Dreams" during the company's outing in Subic.

During that short dance number, the cloud of ownership uncertainty seemed to have parted for a few minutes for the officials, including chair and chief executive Manuel "Manolo" Lopez, who was all smiles and in high spirits.

The song itself seemed to send all attendees to beside the company up—although this might not have been deliberate on the part of whoever chose the song)—"We'll always be together, however far it seems." Or it could also be a premonition of things to come, when those in position today might no longer be there by May, when the balance of power shifts—"We'll always be together, together in electric dreams." —Abigail L. Ho

Service on silver platter

THE SECURITY signed operations and maintenance agreement (OMA) between National Power Corp. and Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. is a prime example of a tale of transparency.

The signing of the deed fulfills a provision of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act and its implementing guidelines. Other no problem there. The problem is her when the actual agreement is signed...without the Napocor board's approval.

Prior to the crafting of the agreement, a review committee composed of senior Napocor officials was tasked to comment on how the agreement should be drafted—standard operating procedure for them. Napocor executives did their homework and came out with their comments. To their consternation, not one of their suggestions was considered in the final version of the OMA.

Now Napocor employees are disappointed (to understatement) and shot (to even bigger understatement). They feel as if they're being told to take the devil's march. With the OMA in place, employees are afraid that proceeds from the privatization of the power firm's assets will be channeled to the administration's election fund, through PSALM. Many of them own feel betrayed by ex-Napocor president Froilan Trampolin, once one of their own before joining PSALM in 2001. He rejoined Napocor late last year as president. In this deal, he looks to be the executioner who served John the Baptist's head on a silver platter to Salome. —Abigail L. Ho

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Banks' resources hit ₱7.28T

BIR targets electronic tax cheats

By Russel W. Geronga

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE is running after taxpayers who have availed of the agency's "electronic friendly" electronic payment systems but failed to actually make the payment.

Revenue Commissioner Jose S. Buguion III said he has ordered regional district offices to pursue the supposed delinquents who accounted for "billions" of pesos in taxes.

According to Buguion, these taxpayers have enlisted in the BIR's electronic filing and payment system, allowing them to file tax returns and pay through the Internet.

He said the BIR aimed to collect P65 billion in 2009, adjusting that target, he added, would depend on the participation of individuals and enterprises.

Buguion was speaking at a conference organized by the Philippine Chambers of Commerce and Industry held yesterday at the New World Renaissance Hotel in Makati City.

BSP: Bank system remains sound as asset base continues to expand

By Michelle V. Rosca

COMBINED RESOURCES OF BANKS and nonbank financial institutions in the country rose by a double-digit margin in 2008 to what the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said was proof that the domestic financial system remained stable in the face of a global economic meltdown.

Data from the BSP showed that total resources of the country's financial system hit P7.28 trillion as of end-2008—up 18 percent from P6.61 trillion seen the previous year.

Commercial and universal banks accounted for much of the growth in resources, registering an increase of 19 percent to P5.21 in billion from P4.39 trillion posted in 2007.

Growth in resources of commercial and universal banks more than offset the 1.6-percent decline in resources of savings and mortgage banks from P373 to P367 billion, and the 5-percent drop in resources of thrift banks from P861.6 billion to P777.4 billion.

Nonbank financial institutions posted total resources of P1.30 trillion—up 8.7 percent from P1.27 trillion.

Resources of rural banks settled at P170.2 billion (up from 165.86 billion), microfinance banks at P6[illegible] billion (unchanged from the previous year), and credit unions and cooperatives at P65.4 billion (up from P40.41 billion).

"The banking system remains sound, and confidence in capital in most have stood by," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. told reporters. "We believe that will help mitigate the impact of the negative trend, but back loop that other countries are experiencing."

Negative feedback loop is a vicious cycle that the BSP said the economy should avoid by encouraging banks to lend more to the public.

The fact that resources of banks have grown even more is a testament that these institutions have the capacity to shore up lending to consumer and businesses, thereby help in jump-priming the economy.

According to Tetangco, credit has remained sufficiently available to businesses and consumers.

"We are not experiencing the kind of credit crunch experienced in the United States and Europe," Tetangco said.

But he added it was crucial for banks to maintain their lending activities.

IMF to scale down growth outlook for RP

[illegible]

and advanced economies in Europe were are likely to be joining them for 2009 said their economies were now set to contract by 3.3.3 percent this year.

The Philippines, although in a relatively better position to escape a recession, would not be spared from the ill effects of the turmoil. With the United States and European being its two biggest export markets, the IMF said the Philippines would likely post slower than earlier estimates as well.

"We are currently in the process of reviewing the macroeconomic framework for the Philippines, including growth and other projections," Daniela Bonomo, IMF resident representative in the Philippines, told reporters said in the forecasts.

In its outlook for the Philippines announced in February, the IMF said the economy would likely grow 2.25 percent this year. But the IMF said recent global developments necessitated a review of its growth outlook for the Philippines.

The United States and Europe account for 17 and 14 percent, respectively, of the Philippines' export income. Since October last year, the country's export earnings have fallen by at least 40 percent year-on-year because of dwindling demand from its foreign customers.

Electronics, the Philippines' main export product, are the most affected.

Remittances, the Philippines' main source of investment from overseas Filipino workers to another reported adverse impact of the recession in the United States and Europe.

The BSP has already revised its export and remittances to stay about the same as last year's $26.3 billion.

The BSP said, however, that other growth in remittances this year would still be substantial enough to fuel consumption and help ensure that the economy avoids a contraction.

The BSP has also announced that it has revised its macroeconomic stimulus package to help ease the domestic economy effect despite the global turmoil. Economic managers said some $148 billion from the government's $1.42-trillion budget for 2009 earmarked for infrastructure projects and social services would help participate the economy. So other P179 billion is expected to be [illegible] by state-owned firms and the private sector to support economic development efforts.

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ANTI-CORRUPTION MEASURE

ADB helps RP strengthen procurement system

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB) agreed to help the Philippines further strengthen its procurement process in another effort to curb corruption, which is holding back the country's economic growth.

In a report posted on its website, the ADB said it had approved a grant worth $600,000 (about P29 million), which will be used to enhance the government's procurement process.

The government is expected to chip in a counterpart fund of $200,000 (about 99.8 million).

ADB has acknowledged government's efforts to streamline the procurement processes in its line agencies to make them more transparent, but said there was big room for improvement.

ADB cited the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System (PhilGEPS), managed by the Department of Budget and Management, which was launched in 2006.

Under PhilGEPS, procurement requirements, bids and contract awards are posted online.

"While the system is designed to provide information about procurement opportunities and contract awards, it does not every bidding and has no payment facility ... The current PhilGEPS functionality falls short of addressing the efficiency and economy objectives of public procurement," ADB said.

ADB also noted that requirements under PhilGEPS were not fully complied with, as some awards of bid contracts were still not seen online.

Another problem is lack of uniformity in the bidding documents required by government agencies.

ADB said the technical assistance will help fund the fallout through on PhilGEPS, which it said would further improve government procurement.

"The TA [technical assistance] will improve transparency, efficiency and accountability in government procurement and reduce opportunities for corruption," ADB said.

ADB is one of the Philippines' biggest sources of official development assistance.

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Vulcan spots mine sites in Negros

By Rue T. Dichoso

VULCAN INDUSTRIAL AND MINING CORP. may raise its mining activities in Negros Occidental to a new level due to the encouraging prospects of its two sites in the province.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, the company said that it had filed a letter with the regional office of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau "expressing its intention of declaring mining project feasibility" of its Mineral Production Sharing Agreements with the government.

Vulcan is looking for copper and gold in two sites under MPSA 102-97-VI and MPSA 113-98-VI, both in Negros Occidental in the Visayas.

"The definitive declaration of Mining Project Feasibility, together with all supporting documents, which are being worked out and finalized, shall be submitted to the government office in due course," Vulcan said.

Vulcan added that project details would be presented to the company's board of directors once finalized.

Vulcan's consolidated gross revenue for the nine months ended Sept. 30, 2008 reached P82.9 million from P62.26 million in the same period the previous year.

Its net income after tax, however, dipped to P930,000 as of September 2008 from P1.48 million in the comparative period the previous year.

The company's revenue mainly came from its subsidiary Vulcan Minerals Corp., since the parent concentrated on exploration activities and had no active mine.

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RISTORANTE SANTO FOOD TURISMO AT SOFITEL

A century of Futurism - visual concerts in 32 European and Asian cities

Every dish in the Futurist Cookbook will be magically and musically brought to life by Cologne-based composer Rochus Aust and his ensemble Re:load Futuro on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Futurist Manifesto. Under the leadership of the Italian actor Flavio Perini, the ensemble will set to music and visualise the Futurist Cookbook at 32 locations around Europe and Asia. Each event will be unique: each of the 32 menus will be composed specially for the place concerned and performed only once. In 2009, Ristorante Santo Food Turismo will be performed in Paris, Marseille, Hanoi, Manila, Jakarta, Rome, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Bucharest, London, Berlin, and Cologne, among others.

Rochus Aust says: "The futurist recipes consist of dynamics, speed, noises and simultaneity! The performance aims to tickle the ear rather than the palate. The table will be lost, disconnect, played to and around, flooded with light and video projections, then will itself finally join in as a vibrating sound musician. The Cucina Futurista or Futurist Cookbook, developed in the 1930s by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, ignores the usual cultural notions of the "edible." In short, dishes are composed according to purely aesthetic points of view in the sense of the Futurists, overriding the most fundamental purpose of physical ingestion, leading not to a feeling of fullness but to one of pure artistic enjoyment. The menu includes such seductive delicacies as AEROVIVANDA, which consists of boiled food, tubular air, and balloon-flight trajectory, with friendly air hostesses available to help with air-sickness bags during Vuillemot; and EDULIORIE a POLO NORD, where, at the height of the technical elimination, the tables are emptied. Five nights acoustic acts become an equidistant sea running through the audience, then the dessert is brought in from the north.

Rochus Aust is a trumpeter, composer, performer and installation artist who operates at the crossroads of music, musical theatre, visual art and installation. Other members of Re:load Futuro include Flavio Perini (chef de cuisine/host), Bosco Petronzio (trumpet/cuisseau), Frieke Dideri (clarigo/clarinet/pasta) and Florian Zeidler (sound design/pastels).

There is limited seating at the event. Tickets are P3800 each and are valid for both "Ristorante Santo Food Turismo" and cocktails after the show, to be served by the assistants and of the hotel. Tickets are on sale at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza lobby, 13 am - 10 pm). Tel 857-3888 local 1888 or 0920-9082172 and Goethe-Institut Manila (Monday-Friday, 10 am - 4 pm). Tel 817-0876.

For more information, please visit **www.goethe.de/manila**

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* Based on the analysis of a nationwide consumer coping behavior data gathered during the third quarter of 2008 or the start of the global financial crisis, conducted by FACSEL INC., the market research advocacy arm of Mannsmith. Sales level data will be presented.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER:

Dr. Ned Roberto is vice chairman & chief insight advisor of Mannsmith and Fielders, Inc. and chairman of FACSEL Inc. He is the 1st Asian co-author of Philip Kotler, author of over 10 marketing books (including User-Friendly Marketing Research), a former professor of Asian Institute of Management, a multi-awarded marketing advocator (Agora awardee '94 & 1st Lifetime Achievement Awardee in marketing education '00) and a well-read / well-respected columnist of Marketing Ex.

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ABENSON

PNB challenges RJ claim on Buendia lot

By Dimitri L. Lozada

PHILIPPINE National Bank plans to challenge an order issued by the regional trial court of Makati that confirms businessman "RJ" Jacinto's title control of a commercial piece of prime real estate in Makati City.

In a press statement, the bank of taipan Lucio Tan said that the writ of executive issued by Judge Rommel Baybay of Branch 150 of the Makati RTC was "not justified" because it effectively "circumvented the Supreme Court decision that referred to a different set of assets owned by the bank's investment.

"The Supreme Court affirmed its decision ... referred to the foreclosure of a shared mortgage covering the TV station and radio facilities of Rajah Broadcasting Network Inc., and not to the real estate mortgage over the Buendia and Taguig property, the possession and ownership of which have been with PNB since 1998," the bank said.

The Buendia property is an 8,000-square meter lot at the corner of Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue and Pasay de Roxas that the bank sold to Jacinto for $3.40 million in 1996, making it the most expensive real estate transaction in the country at P90,000 square meter in the prevailing exchange rate at that time.

After the outbreak of the 1997 East Asian financial crisis, Jacinto defaulted on his dollar-denominated loan that he took out from PNB in order to pay for the property he bought from the same bank.

Jacinto retook control of the property two weeks ago on the strength of the Makati court order.

PNB protested, however, that some of executive "are never issued to a foreclosure sale," Bautista's injunction, only final judgment."

PNB said it would "avail itself of all legal remedies" to reinforce the court order and regain control of the property.

In October 2007, RJ Ventures Realty & Development Corp. filed a similar motion for the issuance of writ of execution with Judge Jocelyn Vivencio of Branch 66 of the Makati RTC.

Stocks close 2% higher

MANILA, PHILIPPINES — Stocks closed 2.08 percent higher yesterday, thanks to the upturn in the US market and a stream of foreign fund managers in Manila, brokers said.

The composite index added 38.60 points, close to the 1,917.49, while the all-shares index rose 1.67 percent to 1,164.20 points.

There were 76 gainers, 116 losers and 47 issues unchanged. Turnover totaled 4.56 billion shares worth P164 billion. AFP

Currencies

Bank	Sale	Purchase
Bank of China	6.8400	6.8400
Japan	0.0107	0.0106
United Kingdom	1.4100	1.4100
Hong Kong	0.1340	0.1340
Switzerland	0.6600	0.6600
Canada	0.6600	0.6600
Singapore	0.6600	0.6600
Australia	0.6600	0.6600
Europe	1.4100	1.4100
Saudi Arabia	0.2600	0.2600
Taiwan	0.0340	0.0340
Denmark	0.2600	0.2600
Thailand	0.0340	0.0340
UAE	0.2600	0.2600
EU	1.4100	1.4100
Korea	0.0600	0.0600
Kuwait	0.2600	0.2600
Qatar	0.2600	0.2600
Bahrain	0.2600	0.2600
Malaysia	0.2600	0.2600
New Zealand	0.2600	0.2600
Sweden	0.2600	0.2600
Norway	0.2600	0.2600

C5 Road extension expected to start this year

Petron sees return to profitability in '09

By Dixie L. Lucas

PETRON CORP. THE COUNTRY'S largest oil refiner, expects to return to profitability this year, after reporting heavy losses last year due to the volatility of crude prices in the world market.

In an interview yesterday, Petron president Eric O. Recto said market conditions experienced by the company in 2008 were unlikely to repeat themselves this year.

He declined to give specific details, citing disclosure constraints, but said the turnaround in Petron's performance had already started.

"We will likely have a profit in the first quarter because of stable oil prices," Recto said.

He said the relatively stable oil prices in the international market in January and February helped Petron manage its oil inventory costs better.

He added that while the volatility of oil prices had picked up this month, the market would not likely see the return of last year's conditions, which saw prices rise to as high as $147 per barrel in July of 2008.

Crude prices have dropped almost 70 percent since then.

Because of this, the company—which locked in three major petroleum shipments last year at near-peak prices—had to absorb the losses as prompt prices fell.

By the end of 2008, Petron's losses hit P5.08 billion.

In the meantime, Recto said the company was planning to issue "at least P10 billion" from the market this year, either in the form of debt, equity or a combination of both.

The proceeds will be used to upgrade the company's refinery and build a power plant that will meet Petron's power requirements.

However, the final amount has yet to be decided and it will depend on the company's needs as well as the capital market conditions in the second quarter of the year.

By Abigail L. Ho

THE EXTENSION OF C5 ROAD TO THE North Luzon Expressway, which forms part of the P500-billion private sector component of the state stimulus package, should be underway within the year.

According to Donald Dee, chair emeritus of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the road proponent for the project is now in the final stage of the feasibility study it was conducting.

The project should commence within six months after the completion of the study.

Metro Pacific Investment Corp. is the proponent of the C5 connection to NLEx.

As with other infrastructure projects that the private sector will undertake this year under the stimulus package, he said the C5 road extension project would not require sovereign guarantees.

"This project would be one of two final road projects that would be submitted to Malacañang before the end of the month," he continued.

Also set to be in motion in the coming weeks, Dee said, was the extension of the NLEx to Carmen town in Pangasinan.

To be done in three phases, he said the project's first phase was expected to take off by next month, and should be completed within two to three years.

It will be more than 70-percent financed by private funds, with the rest to be funded by the government, he said.

"But of the project is developmental, so it's not viable. That's why we need government support for this. There is no need for a government guarantee on this, just developmental support as the project can be financed," Dee said in an earlier interview.

He said the project should run about P10 billion, with this amount already fully committed.

In the meantime, Dee said uncertainties of lack of transparency with regard to the implementation of these projects were unfounded, as these projects had already gone through government scrutiny and were actually part of the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan.

"This is actually the most transparent way of doing things. These have been published by the National Economic and Development Authority's. The projects were already analyzed and anybody can make a proposal [to implement them]," he said yesterday.

"The private sector did not choose which projects should be part of the stimulus package. These are all part of the MTPDP. There's a list of pre-selected projects, and the private sector is welcome to make their proposals," he added.

Part of private sector component of stimulus package

Former Budget Secretary and University of the Philippines economist Benjamin Diokno earlier said "an elevated private-sector outlook" had to business participating in the process of undertaking projects under the state stimulus.

"It will be better to not have the private sector [in the stimulus plan]," he said.

MOTORING

Editor Cesar D. Maglonsong

Audi Q5 set to take on rivals

Text and photos by Charles E. Bahas

WE TRAVERSED SEpang, Malaysia's well-paved highways, driven through rain-made runs, rocky outcrops, uncoiled slippery inclines of up to 30 degrees and then descended its steep opposite side.

Afterward, we headed to a vacant parking lot where each of us were compelled to traverse left and right like crazy and raged to have burnt the marks on the asphalt.

Indeed, it takes this write to do all these to such a lovely and finely crafted set of wheels. But it was a necessary thing in order for us participants to prove what such is classing that their newly introduced Q5 is the most dynamically capable SUV in its class.

We decided on an itinerary that would let each of the participants to have fun, without so much supervision (with just a road book to guide them to their next destination). This way, the driver would really experience what we are talking about. We have so much confidence about this SUV," said Chester Board, Audi AG marketing head for Southeast Asia.

Prepped up

And he is right, this SUV is all prepped up and ready to meet the competition head-on. This midsize SUV will compete against the BMW X3, the Mercedes-Benz GLK, Land Rover Freelander and the newly launched Lexus RX 350.

With its 2,807-meter wheelbase, the Q5 is slightly longer than the BMW X3 (by 10 mm); it's also lower, and has a stylish coupe-like roofline that contributes to an impressively low drag coefficient of 0.33 (drives against the wind like a turbine).

This writer was able to drive the Q5 2.0 TFSI variant, which is essentially the same model that will be brought here in the Philippines, according to PGA Cars marketing manager Dave Bautista.

As it's name suggests this Q5 variant is powered by a turbocharged 2-liter, four-

THE Q5's suspension, steering and brakes are car-like.

cylinder fuel-stratified injection that generates 211 horsepower, is capable of hurtling to the car from 0 to 100 kph in just over 7 seconds as well as obtain a maximum speed of 223 kph.

What is impressive about this engine as well as its newly developed seven-speed S-tronic gearbox (which incorporates two multiplate clutches using a wet sheet to direct torque for the odd-numbered gears and a hollow shaft which routes around the solid shaft for even gears) is that these technologies combine to give the Q5 2.0 TFSI an average fuel consumption of 11.7 km per liter, which, even if this figure is 10 percent near it will pretty efficient for an SUV.

Not just for road

Although the Q5 is primarily a road vehicle, Audi AG Q5 product manager Jeremick Green says that with 20-cm ground clearance, it can handle water up to half a meter deep and could climb 22 degree slopes.

"And inside the Q5 we've completely use of high- and ultra-high-strength steel. The hood, tailgate and much of the suspension are fabricated from aluminum to lower weight and improve handling," Green described.

The Q5 comes with Audi's Quattro permanent all-wheel drive, which is a 40-60 rear biased torque split that distributes drive power asymmetrically and dynamically among all four wheels (giving the Q5 a more sporting driver).

The Q5's Electronic Stabilization Program goes beyond most mobility systems to offer settings for an even sportier set-up, all used (under) drive a lot softer) and whenever you have a cargo on the roof rack to compensate for a higher center of gravity).

The Q5 also has a standard hill descent assist that makes driving down steep slopes safer by holding the speed at below 30 kph (with this function activated, you just have to steer the steering wheel and top off the brakes).

Indeed, during this short test drive last weekend, the Q5 remained composed and flat through dynamic 8-corners and sand surfaces. And even though it does quite high from the ground, it feels more like a sedan than a that you will feel confident and safe whenever you decide to run from your usual sedan driving style.

Pocholo crosses life's finish line

POCHOLO HARRIED COULD never stop racing cars. Even when he was in his 70s, an age when other race drivers were content to retire and rest on their laurels, Pocholo continued to race, sometimes relishing against young men half his age. These included his four sons—Kiokki, Georgie, Louie and Miguel—who inherited his penchant for racing.

Last Wednesday, Pocholo crossed the final finish line when a violent battle against cancer that withered his body but not his fighting spirit. The last time I saw him was at the June 25 opening of the 2008 Auto Race Show at Glorietta. Despite his ailment, he was his usual cheerful self, greeting me with a hug and a big smile.

But when we sat down at a table to make arrangements, he informed me sadly about Kiokki's illness. From then, Pocholo hinted that he did not want to live long enough to bury Kiokki. It was the only thing that could break his will to win his fight against cancer—the possibility that he could outlive his own son. At the same, Pocholo's eldest Ellen confessed to some friends that never in his decision to finally let go.

Although I wasn't a close friend of Pocholo's as his family nor a frequent motor sports spectator, I could see how they were united by their love for racing. As mentioned by Jaime Gonzales in "Fun Lines," the book on the history of motor sports published by the Automobile Association Philippines, Pocholo began indulge in the age of 50 after returning from the United States in 1963. He invested the balance of racing with a go-kart that soon three Marcos (Senad Pete champion Dodjie Lazard lost him.

In 1980, Pocholo won in the Shell Go Rally and garnered the driver of the year award in the next two years. He went on to rule the Driver of the Year title in 1970,

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

1972 and 1976 for a total of five. His six victories in three are only here but also in Singapore and Macau. Aside from auto rallies, Pocholo competed in various local Grand Prix, slalom and circuit racing.

The road wasn't always a smooth one for Pocholo. In 1967, his Firemist crashed a parked bus on Edsa. It was a nearly fatal accident that left a scar on his jaw which he covered by growing a beard. In 1972, his Toyota collided with Vic Reny Teh's Austin Mini on the Ortigas track. In 1977, an accident involving him and Arthur Tanson at the BP Resort in La Filipe made him call for a stop to circuit racing on residential tracks.

Pocholo's decision to boycott residential tracks showed his commitment to safety and inspired him to build a road racetrack. He realized his dream when he opened the Subic International Raceway (SIR) in 1994. Up to the time he was mistaken with camera, Pocholo managed SIR with the help of his children. SIR became the venue he his sons, now daughters-in-law Michelle (Kiokki's wife), to hone their car racing skills.

I then met Pocholo when he was at the top of his racing career and I interviewed him for a business article promoted. His second wife Connie had been my high school classmate. Since that time, whenever we ran into each other or met, her cheery and now on launches. Pocholo and whichever family members he with. Him would greet me with a bear-hug.

Pocholo was a gentleman with a sunny disposition, a friend who never spoke badly about anyone or wanted anyone malefic. He had a sense of humor, was never aggressive or overbearing despite his achievements in racing. He was always eager to learn. He pursued his motor sports and sincerely loved people, so they loved him back.

In his letter to "Fun Lines," Pocholo wrote: "For us, the satisfying level of old-time car racing has set in. But look definitely now up our successors and makers us feel the excitement of the good old days once more. Of course, to also brings sadness as we see the aging lives of many of our friends who have already entered life's finish line."

Come see him, Pocholo farewell.

The hybrid hypothesis

MY DRIFT

Andre Fabini

THE NEWS SEEMS TOO GOOD TO BE true. In a few months according to the news and hoopla, a hybrid will finally be sold in the Philippines. After years of wondering and gatecrashed gatecrashing, Toyota seems to have gotten the idea that a gasoline-electric vehicle is something the Filipino motorist will consider purchasing. Another manufacturer is rumored to be announcing its release date (soon as well).

To be frank, the idea of using a vehicle with low environmental impact and relatively fuel-consuming looks extremely enticing. The handful of hybrid car units that have been parked around the local media over the past few years have delivered what promises: super-frugal fuel consumption, couple of the downsides.

Distinct hybrid flavor

In varying degrees of praise, the message most evangelized is that the future of Philippine motoring will definitely have a distinct hybrid flavor to it. Now what if you can be clopped. The public will now be able to experience what this new-fangled system of propulsion is all about.

As with all new things, questions about hybrid technology will obviously be on the top of every motoring enthusiast's mind. It seems prudent to know the technical specifications in hexadecimal, octanic and the sequel. In truth, there are more important questions that need to be answered other than how fast, how efficient and how technologically advanced it is once brought of use is.

Bringing over the release of the gasoline-electric hybrid is the gray cloud of uncertainty as to why there are some not yet licensed outlets. Through channels both official and off the record, many motorists were given as to why these cars were pressed to the countries but are for sale to the public.

Price

Most pointed to the fact that price would be an issue. This was the simplest and most logical explanation. With a close premium on this technology in markets where this is already sold, the Filipino buyer would be hard pressed to rationalize paying for one given our local economic conditions. Here's the funny thing about that argument. What has changed in today's local economic climate that will make the purchase of an expensive economy car more attractive?

The other issues were with the durability of the complex symbiotic engine system, particularly only the essential battery banks. An engineer from one of the manufacturers said that the dry filtering system for the batteries was susceptible to failure in the dusty and damp operating conditions in the Philippines.

So we ask again, what has changed in today's local climate that does not make this an issue anymore? Maybe, one may think, that they've fixed the issue already. Are the idea of a new-old, Philippine-specific hybrid does not make sense in an industry that thrives on streamlined product lines and efficient, in the minimal wheel-time of production.

Battery system

The heartiest of these questions, one that is a general problem with hybrid cars across the globe, deals with the longevity of the nano battery banks. All of us are aware that even certain parts of Luzon are in certain public institutions degrade in their ability to store energy. A hybrid without a properly working battery system is functionless! Iron, performing at peak levels of efficiency is less its reason for existence.

The cost of replacing the massive sets of cells that line most of the vehicle's floor pan is obviously prohibitive. If a useless suburban such may be said to be considered as part of a vehicle's warranty or if the first few years is fated as a consumable item, just as brake pads, tires and spark plugs. Round the replacement of the all-important battery bank is covered by a battery guarantee, what happens when said warranty runs out?

All these issues need to be weighed against the closing points of the technology. Once pricing is released publicly, it will be very easy to run a cost/benefit study on hybrids. Figuring out how long it will take to recoup the price premium with fuel savings will be the deciding factor. But these issues, certain intangibles come into play when we consider about hybrids. The coolness of owning one and the impact on carbon emissions are well, priceless.

Luxury, speed keep RP auto industry 'stimulated'

By Tessa R. Salazar
Contributor

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas issued a fearless forecast just recently, and seemingly supports Jaypinas Motoring's theory that Filipino businessmen, particularly those with Chinese blood, know when to make money and know when to spend them: "Filipinos to spend more amid crisis."

That means, according to the BSP, domestic consumption will continue to grow this year. Remittances, despite reported job cuts offshore, are seen to remain substantial enough to fuel growth in consumer spending. Personal consumption, which has been growing by at least 6 percent every year over the past three decades, is not expected to slack off this year.

That's very good news, indeed, particularly to the luxury segment of the automotive industry.

TRAFFIC along Edsa appears no brand. The Benz C250 behind Lexus IS 350.

Launches

GAIL Motors is wise to emboldened now with another Rs 45 million Mercedes-Benz E-Class in May to add to its stable of new luxury cars here.

Aston Carmakers Corp.-BMPC for its part is introducing its new BMW 7 Series in the next quarter.

Volvo Blowtex introduced its luxury SUV the XC90 V8 Sedando March 5. The XC90 features a 3.2-liter V6 dual VVT (Variable Valve Timing-Intelligent) engine, 6-speed automatic transmission and all-wheel capabilities.

Many image Filipinos do boast that it will unveil the much-awaited 2009 Imprezo sedan to the public on April 2-5 during the Manila International Auto Show at the World Trade Center. Previous dozen Boss Gold will perform demolish stunt using Subaru Imprezo Imprezo.

Jaypinas Motoring examined more closely what the ado surrounding three popular luxury brands was all about. The loaded, sophisticated, and sometimes complicated Mercedes-Benz C250, the all-new safe-as-ever Volvo S80, the subdued but high-tech Lexus IS350 compared to go head-to-head with the BMW 3 Series and Audi A4, and the Subaru Imprezo WRX (not the STI version, that is very clear remember it).

Short but sweet drive

Brought out exactly matched competitors, we drove the 2008 Mercedes-Benz C250 (evaluated with AMG package (140K) vs. chi-cylinder engine, priced at P4.480 million) and the 2009 Lexus IS300 (295PS vs. six-cylinder engine; priced at P2.930 million) together.

Both cars, however, have been officially classified as "medium cars." There are other similarities, to wit: start buttons without the need to put the key in the ignition slot; paddle shifters and cruise control features; dual sunflaps; automatically folding side mirrors when the vehicles are locked; and separate air-con control switches so front seats and rear seats on the rear seats.

The C250 is pricey, owing to a bigger engine. Its sport suspension, lowered by 25 mm, makes for more pleasurable driving mode; more agile-inducing by its speed-sensitive sport steering.

The validated looking IS300 offers "less intimidating" controls (and the pedals are softer), its foot brake and foot release makes more sense than the C300's (foot brake but hand release).

Although the IS300 doesn't possess the voice-activated controls of the C250's audio entertainment system, the entry-level IS300's proximity sensor is thought fully function-specific, which means you'll be notified at which side or rooms no obstacle is getting much too close for comfort.

IS300 has other comfort features: The seats have individual temperature controls (which may give rise to the theory that each half has its own "boiling point"). The filling slots on the side doors are user-friendly, allowing three coins to access. The side door controls are dazzled, making them easier to grab as well.

Sleepy at Volvo S80

Probably the luxury sedan with more sleeper steel than the C250 or IS300 is Volvo's S80. It has the smallest engine at 2.3 liters and five cylinders, but features light pressure-ratio and Continuously Variable Valve Timing (CVVT). The manifolds run temperature countermeasures any tendency to underscore while enhancing stability, and results simply in a ride to "sleep for."

Running Volvo's obsession for safety, the unit is also reportedly equipped with, well, safety features such as dynamic stability and traction control hydraulic brake assist.

Everything about the S80 exudes comfort, convenience and class. The subby holes are spacious, the seater console allows this, and even rear audio console incorporates sockets for personal headphones, and even allows passengers to watch DVD movies, songs or playback. The "B" pillar allows ventilation for any passengers, and there's dual zone electronic climate control as well.

Spirited WRX

For spirited driving without the added weight of so many other "essential" features, especially for the flame other luxury brands do, Subaru Imprezo WRX fits the profile. For P1.726 million, you get the bruiser personality of a performance car and the creature had necessary for an everyday car.

On the open tracks, rapid is hit 225 kph with this five-speed WRX. (The STI version can go for 250 kph). In traffic, well, you can expect your fellow motorists to gape forgot at your tally-prowess handles strikingly good looks.

THE Impreza WRX 2.5-liter turbo is a hot hatch that could give other performance hatches a run for their money.

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LIFESTYLE Parenting

In a way, parents graduate along with their kids

THE MOMENT IS MY MIND BEGAN TO PLAY again the other day as my daughter graduated from high school. After 14 years, we finally bade goodbye to familiar roads, curtains and faces. Senior then I said "yes" Because after more than a decade of shuttling her to and from school, little I had graduated, too.

Watching her walk up the steps to receive her diploma, I thought about how my mother felt 27 years ago. Perhaps back then, she had felt the same way I do now.

When had silence, my mother, with me in my gown and white uniform, to and from the quiet-boy green campus of Intramuros. On rainy days, she would wade through flood to pick me up, proudly oblivious of her catch-all clothes.

ROOTS AND WINGS

Cathy Babao-Gobaldo

It refers to the '70s and '80s. I was always known as the girl who wore Freshmens jogging suits, and the one whose uniform dress was so short it showed each day. My high school diploma was as much my mother's as it was mine.

Some three decades later, my daughter graduated with the entire valedictorian cheering for me, no fashion but eyes.

How different it was for me back in 1980, when I had only my mother and brother to cheer me on. The summer before graduation, I had lost my father to a heart attack. He died on my 16th in 1992, I missed him terribly.

So my daughter on her graduation day, there was mostly joy though his parents were that the day did not pass without her mentioning her own loss—my mom years ago, when she lost her father to stroke.

Graduation season always makes us both excited and hopeful. Time flies by too fast. And I keep replying close friends from grateful I am for its need of them. 14 years. I was hands-on in raising my daughter. Our children are truly our greatest blessings.

New chapter

Commencement exercises also mark the beginning of a new chapter in her life, and I must slowly learn to let go. The circle of life goes on as our daughter finds herself on the very same campus that her father and I once found ourselves in.

This morning, my daughter and I walked through her new campus in the hopes making preparations for her new life some have. I eagerly walked her through the many corridors that were once so familiar to me. Throughout her—Gospel, a lot of things remain the same. I thought it was uncanny that she opted to wear a yellow Mens Ageless shirt with the classic 'Si my image and 'Classy lines in my heart' written on it. The very same shirt was in vogue when I was a freshman in college on the year that Ninoy was assassinated.

And as the memories of the years spent on campus—both happy and sad, came flooding back, I thought the bookshop. I could not help but purchase a blue and white shirt that was studded with pins that morning. The shirt, embossed with a quote from the school's most famous alumnus (Dr. Jose Rizal) on his thoughts about our school, called out to me—"I spend many happy years there." Though high school was fun, 14 years of college years to be even better. I pray that it will be the same for my daughter and for the many other graduates who leave their comfort zones this month. The world has waiting for you—arm it with faith, kindness, diligence and compassion. Congratulations!

E-mail the author at cathybabao@gmail.com.

CIRCLE of Ms. Author's were Caridad Sanchez, daughter Pia and author

THE RENOWNED Ahora Puppet Show performed for the invitees.

THE BRILLIANT Gang of 3 that has helped make Thailand one of the favorite vacation spots in Asia—Thai Airways Gen. Mgr. Hiran Ciancarelloni, Director for Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines Parntip Maleenpan, and Executive Director for ASEAN and South Pacific Prabh Prinjaleon.

CELAL Aronoles and Pinar Tenggarasari

MARCO Lattre and Nikko Arca of Thai Airways

Fun bash to launch Thailand Grand Sale

THE PENSHOPPE team Alex Montoya and Aileen Ong

THE TOURISM AUTHORITY OF Thailand (TAT), together with Thai Airways International (THAI) and Thai private sector, recently presented a product update for travel agents, media and clients at the gorgeous world-class Dusit Thani Hotel in Makati and Manila Peninsula Hotel in Cebu, dubbings.

Heading the delegation was the deputy governor of TAT Surichai Sarasuppasit. Prabh Prinjaleon, executive director for ASEAN and South Pacific, and vicedent and count Parntip Maleenpan, director for Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines, also attended the fun event.

S. Sarasuppasit invited Filipinos to visit Thailand. "It is time to take the ongoing promotions and tour packages in the country, especially with the annual Thailand Grand Sale happening June 1-Aug. 31, which is just around the corner," which is just around the corner," he neighborly, pulongpulong.

Last year, Bangkok was voted as World's Best City by the Travel and Leisure Magazine for three consecutive years, and Thailand was selected as World's Best Value for Money. Already 300,000 awesome Filipinos visited Thailand in 2008.

Leading the pack is our very own popular Heart Chantaravichoti, brilliant general manager of Thai Airways for the Philippines and Guam, together with his energetic sales team and exhibitors from Thailand: Gaan Nicomic, Mato Orawa World, Tilleya Yoata, CCT M.L.C.C.E. and Bangoke Sky Train Hotel, pulongpulong.

The grand highlights of this adventure were the amazing 7 Wonders of Thailand (Thainess, Evasion, Beaches, Nature, Well-ness, Tuxury and Festivities) and the world-renowned Akaza puppet show jetted in from Thailand by Thai Airways.

Penshoppe's toast to summer

Penshoppe has really come a long way, pulongpus. From a small pepper line to becoming one of the top retail boutiques in the country. Getting their new line of fashion on the roll, Penshoppe held Toast to Summer at the popular People's Palace, Greenbelt 3. The divas rode for the night was blue. Hot party maidens Casey Moran welcomed our town's trendy set, who dug into the yummy canapés as they sipped their cocktails, dubbings. The food was provided by talented chef Ramon Gu, dubbings. But the winning cocktail drink was the slice-refreshing Long White Cloud which had lemongrass, lychee and Absolut Citron, pulongpus.

Grand highlight was the launch of the store's newly famous 2000 collection for guys that had total shades of blue, pulong-go. Yor the gals, Penshoppe offers their blouses in floral, gingham and plaid prints, dubbings.

After leaving the venue, I saw close sky with a full moon and boy was it hot! Wah, pulongpus, summer is definitely here.

Check out Penshoppe's new summer accessories collection at all its boutiques nationwide.

Starbucks Bacolod opening

Well, pulongpus, world-renowned Starbucks gave birth to their latest baby—a one of my favorite southern hometowns in Bacolod with the trademark green Starbucks and cup placed at the entrance. Starbucks Manolo Santoso Lopez, batchoy director, Steve Development, Starbucks Coffee Philippines; his husband, pulongpus southern gentleman Jun Lopez, president, Starbucks Coffee Philippines; Mila Escalera, barista Eduardo and Boy Escalera, hotel-tarts of where Starbucks was put up, attended the opening.

For light entertainment, talented children sang "to prove that with proper motivation and upbringing, kids will be guided through the right path and will maximize their own full potential," explained one of the proud parents.

A few days after Bacolod welcomed Starbucks with wide open arms, Eduardo "Ed" Lopez handed over to Sr. Martha Villanueva a set of books, tons of coffee plus a portion of the proceeds of the first day, pulongpus.

The Lucas Visaya Foundation, Inc., in partnership with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, known as the Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco, were the beneficiaries of this opening. "The foundation aims to continue the convergence of educational and developmental interventions to empower children and once children alike to become honest, productive and self-reliant Christian citizens," Sr. Villanueva said in her short thank-you speech.

STOCATCHER Casey Moran, the southern belle behind the successful event, with Divine Lee and JR Isaac

ILLAC Dina and stunning beauty Dudes Andaluna

ADORABLE lovers Ian Bing and Joey Mead

PAULA Rosales and Christina Bartges

GORGEOUS Mia Ayroso and businessman Alain Hinares

JC TUSECO wearing Penshoppe

DEPUTY Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand Surichai Sarasuppasit and Royal Thai Embassy minister Chaiwon Sudhira

PEOPLE Asia's Ryan Carmona

DRIVE 10 years of the Tourism Authority of Thailand

WEALTH Joseph at Ralph Tiong and Jun Ler and Kevin Cuta, Starbucks Coffee Philippines' General Manager and Wife.

HOBBY Lopez, COO, Starbucks Coffee Phils., and his wife Kris Lopez

INVITEES May and Amy Tolo

ADMIS and Mae Johnson

BEA Soriano in a cool summer outfit

Without batting an eyelash

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Haagen using PIXEL Photo Solutions

GP REYES with RJ Ledesma, Sebastian Zaro and Cat Arambulo

ALL SET to open Bacolod's first Starbucks: Honcho Tomoco Lopez, Director Store Development, Starbucks Coffee Phils., with her husband Jun Lopez, President, Starbucks Coffee Phils., and landowners Mila Escalera, Suzette E. and Boy Escalera

ZENNING Gonzalez with Archie Gonzalez, Lit Lu-o and Belinda Lopez

IVORY and her mom Diony Vargas

STUNNERS members Joni Crisanto, Quito Lopez, Isabel Cacho, Glen Acuna, Char Bregenza, Beverly Po, Zarah Pena, Angela Cuti and Desire Yap

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KIDS CAN PLAY IT COOL ON A HOT SUMMER day with toys that will create waves on the beach and beyond.

Make your own beach in your backyard with above-the-ground pools in fancy shapes where kids can frolic, or fun pools for the whole family. These handy pools are available at Toy Kingdom.

Also in the country's premier toy store are colorful floaters with bit cartoon character designs. There are also swim masks, snorkelers and splash water guns.

There are fun beach play sets that can last from super fun sun.

Toy Kingdom Express outlets are in all SM Department Stores and at Toy Kingdom stores at SM malls at SM Makati, The Podium, V Mall, SM Megamall, SM Southmall, SM City Fairview, The Block at SM City North Edsa and SM Mall of Asia. In the provincial areas, there are at the SM Supermalls in Dumaguete, Lucena, Marilao, Baguio, Bacolod and Batangas in Lanang, and in Cebu, Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro and Davao.

THE LITTLE ones will have tons of water fun with these cool and cuddly pools.

UST filmmaking workshop

The Varsitarian, the official student publication of the University of Santo Tomas, with Silangan Productions, will be holding the first UST Varsitha Film Making Workshop on April 17-18 and 24-25. The workshop will be facilitated by award-winning director Jon Libiran, a UST Varsitarian alumnus and the director of "Tribu," 2007 Gawad ng Pasig Parangal and 2008 Best Youth Film of the Pasig Cinemalaya. The workshop is open to all bona fide Thomasians and college students of Diocesan institutions like Colegio de San Juan de Letran and Angelicum College. Pass a short or full length film (35 that will be screened by Lizardo himself. Films that have been either recently done or entered in film competitions or workshops are accepted. A maximum of 12 participants will be granted scholarships by the Varsitarian to join the workshop. If a group of people is involved in the making of the film, only the director and/or the writer may join the workshop. In a brown envelope containing the CD, include resumé, filled-up application form, and photographs in or April. Submit to the Varsitarian office, Room 105 Tan Yan Kee Student Center, UST, España, Manila. Deadline is extended to March 30. Text 09167952189. Visit www.varsitarian.net.

Martha Stewart Weddings talk

Kaye Laurel and Margarita Fores will give talks at the Martha Stewart Weddings Bridal Fair on March 29-29 at the Gold Pavilion of World Trade Center. Call 4115888 local 1115.

Mega summer expo

SM Megamall's SM Megahalls Hall presents Mega Summer Expo 2009 on March 26-31. Organized by MCT Events, the six-day event is a one-stop shop for summer destinations, vacation packages, fashion trends, discounts sales, hobbies and other family-oriented leisure activities. There will also be arts and crafts workshops, face painting, poster games, raffles, entertainment numbers, and candle making contest and other family- and kid-oriented fun activities. Participating expo vendors will go to ABS-CBN Foundation's Buddy Kalayaan for its environment-saving programs. Call 7383138, 7317758 to 60, 997 8 3909682 or 0923-1965473. E-mail mct_events@yahoo.com or mctevents@gmail.com.

Meet Hello Kitty

Robinsons Malls Nationwide Celebration with Hello Kitty on March 28 to April 26, a series to be held in select Robinsons Malls. Magic shows, balloon twisting, pop the balloon, and tic-atac-toe will be held. You can also meet and greet Hello Kitty. Visit Carnival Fun with Hello Kitty at Robinsons Galleria (March 28, Saturday), Robinsons Metro East (March 29, Sunday), Robinsons Place Ermita/Manila (April 4, Saturday), Robinsons Place Iloilo (April 5, Sunday), Robinsons Place Lipa (April 18, Sunday), Robinsons Starmills Pampanga (April 25, Saturday) and Malltown at Robinsons Place Manila (April 26, Sunday). Admission is free. Carnival Fun with Hello Kitty activities will be open from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., while the meet and greet session with Hello Kitty will start every 2 and 4 p.m. at these selected Robinsons Malls nationwide. Call 6808100 locals 180, 182 or 132.

Jed Madela concert

Cebu-bred idol presents Jed Madela at the Eastwood Mall Open Park on March 29, 7 p.m. Call 6876170 to 74 and look for Anak Eastwood Mall concierge at 7384682 or text 0918-9 8HEISTY.

Earth hour

Earth Hour 2009 aims to reach more than one billion people in 1,000 cities around the world, inviting communities, business and governments to switch off lights for one hour at 8:30 p.m. on March 28. Concerts for Climate and show your support for this cause on March 28, 6:30 p.m. EC Home will also launch its annual summer drink, Lambanog Flavored Lambanog. Bring your own shot glass and sample all four flavors for free. EC Embrace is at the Serenity Plaza, Scout Rallos cor. Tagaig, Call (632) 4124647 or 904 5489.

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Create illusion of space in 20-sq m condo

DEFY GRAVITY. A hidden cantilevered dining table for two allows free-flowing movement. A bar was created without the conventional support legs.

With good planning, you can

By Margs C. Enriquez
Contributor

WITH GOOD SPACE PLANning, a 20-sq m condo need not be like a shoebox.

Architect Erwin Mendoza, managing partner of Tribecasubd2, an interior design and furniture manufacturing firm (tel. 730-1960), has come up with design solutions built-in units, convertible furniture and lots of hidden storage.

"Urbanites, young couples and professionals are looking into small pads in the metropolis. We come up with a system where you can double the space.

Mendoza shows how a 20-sq m one-bedroom unit can function like a 40-sq m condo unit.

• Light, neutral colors make the room expansive.

• Since clutter is the main concern of condo-dwellers, many of the walls are actually built-in cabinets.

• To save on space, the furniture proportion is scaled down and have dual purposes. Benches contain lots of drawers and freestanding cupboards can be converted into a work desk. Beds and iron boards can be tucked in the walls and laid out when needed.

• Doubling the space means doubling the utility. You can use the space for other activities during the day. A room, for instance, can be a study or office by day and converted into bedroom at night.

• The kitchen can be transformed into dining area with cabinet cantilevers that can be folded up into a dining table. The built-in-ref actually a walk-in closet.

Tribecasubd2's furniture is made from engineered wood in laminate. "You don't have to cut down trees. Engineered wood uses only the branches. This is the new inclination of buyers. They want a nature-friendly approach in manufacturing," says Mendoza.

The architect explains that the 20-sq m condominium has become a big market trend. It has been popular with people working in call centers. "Twenty years ago, people moved into the suburbs because the city was getting crowded. But with the rising cost of gasoline and traffic, they're now acquiring small condominiums in the city for convenience," he says.

"Our advice is that for a small space, stick to simple natural colors so the space looks expansive. Too much of plain colors can get dull so we add accent paints and accent finishes...a range of finishes in which all the favorites match. The selections are abundant. They can be mixed and matched without worrying that nothing can blend. The colors are mostly earth tones and neutral colors drawn from nature and sunlight. The finishes are suitable for condo living."

CRAFTS, D4

GARFIELD — BY JIM DAVIS

A LIPIN — BY JESI ARARA

PIGGLY WIGGLY — BY PAT BRADY

DICK TRACY

LOVE NOTES — BY ELIZABETH CHECKLO

JAMES BOND — BY JAMES SCOTT

DIVINE COMEDY — BY STEVEN PASSLOW

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT

ATOMIC AND WEEDY — BY LISA SACCILOTTO

TUBBOK — BY MANA COLL

RUBE MACHINE — BY TRYGVE ARAERA

BEN — BY DANIEL SHELTON

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

	2	9	3				7	8
		3	4	7		2	1	
				1		5		
			1	9	3			
		1				9		
4	9		5				3	
7							5	
	4	2	9				6	
			7	5			2	

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

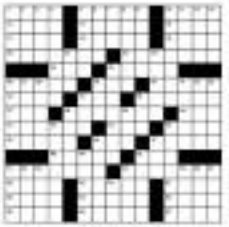
Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

8	9	1	4	3	7	5	2	6
5	4	6	1	2	9	8	3	7
2	3	7	8	5	6	9	4	1
6	8	3	9	7	4	1	5	2
1	7	4	2	9	3	6	8	5
9	2	5	6	8	1	3	7	4
3	6	8	5	4	2	7	1	9
4	5	9	3	1	8	2	6	7
7	1	2	9	6	5	4	9	3
3	5	2	7	6	8	4	1	9

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Yesterday's Puzzle Solved

Survival instinct becomes an art

Milo Naval turns throwaway stuff into exhibit furniture

By Alec Y. Porgues

FURNITURE DESIGNER MILO Naval has just proven that seemingly worthless objects—soft drink crowns, bottle caps, lampshade signages and even dried seeds known—make functional works of art, good enough to be on exhibit.

And it sets an exhibit that drove the country's design realm wacky.

Drawing from his experience as artist/architect and furniture manufacturer, Naval used conventional furniture-making methods on these everyday objects to produce 16 pieces of furniture installations, including a curtain made of bottle caps ("Drinking Liner") attached to a series of rib legs.

Dubbed as "Survivalism," the exhibit which ran last week at LRI Gallery, Makati, had innovative pieces... "Solomon Rain," a stacked-chevron sofa with its armrests and base sprayed up with dried sorra leaves; "Grenade Furniture," a series of versatile outdoor furniture pieces made of steel frames and covered in woven...

"The last one made a lot of noise," he said. "The welds introduce an element of danger, as a whole, to its support of recycling."

Naval made sure nothing went to waste. A week's supply of soft drink crowns (the inside layers) from the neighborhood sari-sari store, for instance, found their use as cladding of the base of a low easy chair and its matching coffee table.

The designer upholstered an accent chair with the discarded tarpaulin of a soft drink ad ("It's the Real Thing") and the plastic bodies of those bottle caps? Naval turned them into a floor lamp by lining and bunching them together with a series of strings.

Naval even fashioned strips of cotton (rags) from his bridge into a curtain sofa called "Rags to Riches." Using the same technique, he turned corrugated cardboard strips into "Out of the Box," a three-piece set perfect for the den.

"I feel recycling is something all of us should take part in," said Naval. "Everywhere you go, the architectural reality into solving or giving simple suggestions and solutions to the crisis of global warming."

"PUSH and Pull," reconfigurable wooden chairs bound together by rope

FURNITURE designer Milo Naval

"FREE of Life," dried everlasting with-all lamps

"WEAR a Crown," 1970s-era chair covered with bottom (with drink crowns)

"OUT of the Box," made of corrugated cardboard scraps

"WHEN the Bough Breaks," table made of bakawan (mangrove tree)

"MUTUPH Rain," couch sprayed up with dried sorra leaves

"RAGS to Riches," viscose strips made into a sofa

"GRENADE Furniture," outdoor furniture of steel frames and more

"WALKING on Sunshine," ordinary wooden chairs, legs adorned with rubber mold for tsinelas (slippers)

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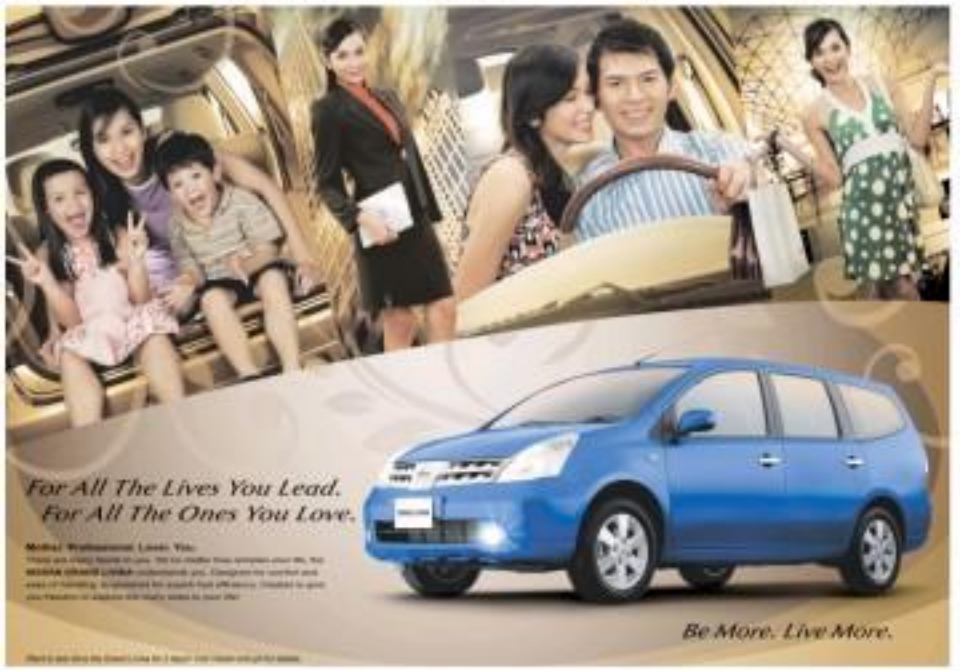

GRAND LIVINA

Arrive in Drive!

Create illusion of space in 20-sq m condo

Viewpage B4

ing—excellent in the wear and tear of daily use and are cost-effective."

Long-lasting finish

Oat finish a Thermaline laminate usually endures extreme heat and pressure. The hardware is also very sturdy and rust-proof and the acrylics are safe for children. "You can use them at the lower portion of the cabinet without fearing that the kids will break it or hurt themselves," says Manahing.

Even the lighting design follows an ideal-proof formula, where every square meter follows a certain rules of lights and fixtures, depending on the setting. The lighting combo so as not to rely lighting for reading or for highlighting artworks, or even lighting for mood and ambiance of space.

EMBRACE BUILT-INS. Beds can be tucked to the walls and laid out when needed

LOSE the ironing board. It is mounted in the cabinet. You save space.

CHOOSE convertible furnishing. Caddy cabinet makes a table for four to six.

On trends, Manahing observes that clients are more cuddle, hence they want a low-maintenance lifestyle with less chores. "Storage is their main concern because clutter is the enemy of space. Compared with the past decades, they are more selective about their accessories. They are more pragmatic and favor objects which have emotional value."

Here's how space can be conserved.

Makati Med holds Lay Forum on Aesthetic Surgery

Well being and beauty are their synonymous? This is what the Makati Medical Center's Aesthetic Center edified into at its recently concluded 1st Lay Forum held at the hospital's Ledesma Hall, which gathered specialists in the fields of Cosmetic/Plastic Surgery, Dermatology and Aesthetic Dentistry.

The formal program began with opening remarks from Dr. Manuel D. Fernandez, Jr., head of the Aesthetic Center, followed by overview of interesting and informative lectures such as Bringing Back Confidence to Your Smile, The Hidden Beauty of Periodontal Plastic Surgery, Mind Common Cosmetic Surgeries for Women, Spots, Dots and Whatnots, Fit into Shape, Marked for Life, and The Science of the Most Intimate Make-over: A Q&A Affair and the line up is finished.

Dr. Imelda Cabral-Villar, Head of MCP Dermatology and Phototherapy, called it "an affair" filled with information on beauty and well-being for your skin, teeth, face and body. The lay forum also provided answers to questions on noninvasive approaches on delaying signs of aging with lasers, light and radiofrequency and minor surgical repairs or touch-ups with fillers, breast augmentation, rhinoplasty, liposuction and micro-implants.

Speakers included a notable list of experts like Aesthetic Dentistry's Pia Antonio, DMD and Regina Morales, DMD; Aesthetic Surgery Center's Dr. Manuel D. Fernandez, Jr. and Dr. Rosabelle Moreno (OB-Gyn); and MCP Dermatology and Phototherapy Center Head Dr. Imelda Cabral-Villar and consultants Dr. Gil Ortiz-Luis, Dr. Estelle Lucero and Dr. Violeta Antonio.

The recently concluded 1st Lay Forum at the Makati Medical Center's Aesthetic Center where specialists in cosmetic/plastic surgery, dermatology and aesthetic dentistry trained audiences on latest techniques. In photo is Dr. Imelda Cabral-Villar, Head of the MCP Dermatology and Phototherapy Center.

Winners of Filipino home-design tilt

A JURY OF ARCHITECTS AND academicians has selected the winners of the national quest for the truly Filipino home design.

Winners of the competition titled "Ang Pinakamagandang Bahay Sa Balat ng Lupa" are:

Professional category: first prize, John Family Anthony L. Buenaflor with Shain Veronique Buenaflor, Kimverandhie Elloso, Jayhan Sabe, Gianel Gay, Raymond John Balmoro, Ernesto Mendoza Jr. II, and Beyond de la Peña; second prize Nonee Arabejo, Rowena Batica, Bert Pesayo; third prize, Jose Eduardo G. Calma with Sherwin Abad, Sarah Casilao, Benjamin Mendoza.

Honorable mention is Roger Mojadoja.

Student category: first prize, Laurence Angelo Angeles, Nathan Cornelius Bolongan, Jayson Gupio (graduates of UP-Diliman); second prize, Kim Patrick Pallanin, Dean Michael Gomez, Jon Joseph Sebastian, Marc Angelo Verzosa Candelaria (graduate students of UP-Diliman); third prize Terrence Pineza (graduate of UP-Diliman), Zach E. Ong (graduate of National University of Singapore).

Honorable mention is Aristotle D. Santiago (graduate of Technological Institute of the Philippines-Manila).

(Above) Winner (winner ratsan or ramon bamboo) will choose as the material of the secondary skin for the farmers house.

Judges included chairperson Ms. Cristina V. Rimilla, retired professor of the UP College of Architecture, practicing architect and vice chair of Arrow Group of Companies, while other members were Ironman 4 Marathon, retired professor and former dean of the UP College of Architecture, practicing architect, partner of PBCH architects and planners and Cebu awardee, Andrew Hardy, practicing architect, partner of design firm Hardy + Casas Architects; Leon M. Mayo, practicing architect, president of Casual Spaces Inc.; and Jose L. Cornelio, practicing architect, dean of the College of Architecture, Silliman University, president, Council of Deans and Heads of Architectural Schools of the Philippines.

Cash prizes will be given to all winners as an awards ceremony slated this month. The first-place designs in both categories will be entered by UCSPT as pre-selected ones to the UP Campus. Updates and details of the winning designs can be viewed at www.upd.edu.ph/~ca or http://geocities.com/pinkbd_2008.

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Looking like Piolo 'not always okay'

By Marinel B. Cruz

TV goes digital; Kapamilya test run in May

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

CHANO Santos-Concio: Plans shakeup for viewers, cripples seven more jobs in the industry

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5 BEST PICTURE

At the Malls

GLORIETTA
Top Chef cooks something up at the Ayala Malls March 27, 6pm, Glorietta 5 Atrium

GREENBELT
Sanctuarium Serenade Live
March 28, Greenbelt 3 Park

ALABANG TOWN CENTER
Top Chef cooks up a storm at the Ayala Malls March 28, 4pm, Activity Center

AYALA CENTER CEBU
Serenethical Serenade Live
March 30, 7pm, The Terraces

MARKET! MARKET!
Australian Cancer Appliance Fair
March 9-31, Activity Center

TRINOMA
Top Chef cooks something up at the Ayala Malls March 28, 4pm, TriNoma Park

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OPENING TODAY

Hikbi (Cry for Redemption)

Stars: PP. Go, Adrian Lauchides, Cromer Sombrit, Lot Dizi, Shiv Valencia

Directed by Delbert D'Oo

After a turbulent journey muddled by drugs and prostitution, a guy man (Go) comes to terms with his lover's (Lauchides) past and finds redemption in his new role as godfather to his boyfriend's daughter. The writer-director candidly addresses this digital film necessary a "personal story." He also hopes to earn his debut movie in to a saved in Englishfunctionality as Indochine Robinsons Galleria.

HARRY Connick Jr. and Renee Zellweger

New in Town

Stars: Renee Zell

surgeon Harry Connick Jr., JK Simmons, Frances Conroy

Directed by Jonas Elmer

A high-powered executive (Zellweger) is sent to Minnesota to help save a faltering factory. Joshua Rothkopf of Time Out states: But "shockingly banal script leads the movie a generic awkwardness." Philip Fornaci of Observer agrees: "Sloppy piece of work, dark, do-before, recommended." David Edwards of Daily Mirror: "It's not groundbreaking cinema ... But fans of the corn Frank Capra would to cook will find it a click to savor."

Knowing

Stars: Nicolas Cage, Rose Byrne, Chandler Canterbury, Lara Robinson

Directed by Alex Proyas

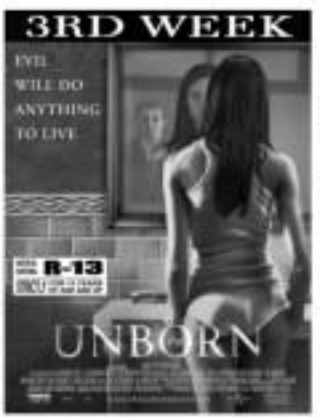
An MIT professor (Cage) discovers that the random numbers scrawled on a time capsule have predicted every major disaster in the last half century. Kurt Loder of MTV calls it a "suspens ... a big, creepy sci-fi thriller." Frank Lovece of Film Journal International describes it as a "Twilight Zone"-like tale filled "intrudues and delivers." Linda Barnard of Toronto Star: "(This) story is worthy but the director seems too much in."

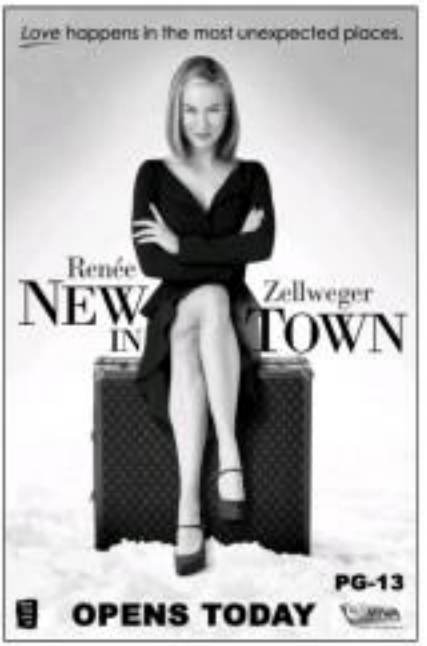
12 Rounds

Stars: John Cena, Aidan Gillen, Ashley Scott, Billy Slaughter, Brandy Moore

Directed by Renny Harlin

A cop (Cena) tries to save his kidnapped girlfriend (Scott) from a terrorist (Gillen). James Di Nunzio of Illinois Times/ABC Radio cause it up as a "by-the-book, make-you-crash-and-burn spectacle that lacks originality." Andrew F. McGlinn of Filmrisk: "If you leave your brain at several, (it's) a fairly enjoyable ride." Louise Keller of Urban Cinefile: "(It) reaches at dishing out a plot that's like a chest game on speed."





Looking like ...

Viewpage 61

The star rely, Aiwa said, he had to carefully pick projects that would set him apart from his famous look-alike. "For one, I don't do love teams. Pede ba ako-alam naman nilang look-alike. Ha-ha-ha! Gusto ko kasi, parang, Mr. Pure Affleck ako."

He has appeared in critically acclaimed, independent films ("Batanes," "Adela," "Eerie") and is currently shooting for the Cinemalaya entry "Sanglaan."

On TV, he is now regularly on ABS-CBN's "Wowowee Lolas."

Also, Aiwa is set to play opposite Judy Ann Santos in the upcoming drama series, "Habang May Buhay."

Joining show biz was purely accidental for him, he said.

Aiwa's family owns the resort where the telenovela "Marimi" was shot in 2004. Director Jerry Sineneng spotted Aiwa and convinced him to join an ABS-CBN casting workshop.

Aiwa and Pinky actually worked together in the drama show "Habang May Buhay."

"He's a star, yes!" Aiwa said of Pinky. "He jokingly told people on the set that he was my boss.

Aiwa revealed that he also had to turn down projects that tended to "challenge my values."

Aiwa—Joseph Emmanuel Aiwa in real life—is a Christian pastor's son. "The restrictions I impose on myself aren't just for my sake but for my whole family's. I always discuss details with my dad before taking on a project."

E-mail:mcruz@hqcinema.ph

TV goes ...

From page E1

boxes to a seamless reception of broadcasts in the Central Luzon province, Concio explained. "The test run will allow us to get feedback from viewers, too. That will help us determine viewer preferences. Do they want another Filipino movie channel? A sports channel? A channel for children?"

She added: "Going digital means a frequency will be able to accommodate 12 channels. At present, there are 12 channels on both the VHF and UHF bands. In other countries, there are over 500 channels. Eventually viewers can also have video-on-demand."

More channels could result in innovation, content-wise, Concio said. "A network can go into niche programming. We don't have to survive on the mainstream all the time. We can address very specific markets."

A network that's not catering to the masses can more easily expand its programming, she said. "A channel can take more risks." This has happened in the US, she noted. "Cable shows like 'Sex & the City,' 'Six Feet Under' and 'Entourage' won in the Emmys. It's the future of television."

The medium needs to evolve with the fast-changing times, Concio said. "In the US, even major networks' audience shares have decreased, with the advent of competing media like the Internet and mobile entertainment."

Further, she said, going digital, which is mandated by the government (deadline is 2015), could also mean more jobs in the broadcast industry.

"It can spell good news to independent filmmakers and content providers," she said.

Right now, the main concern is for motorists the rules. "The National Telecommunications Commission has yet to decide[] whether we will follow the European, American or Japanese standard," said Concio.

She added: "We are also conducting a price sensitivity study for the digital boxes. In other countries, the government provided them."

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4 12 ROUNDS
5 THE PUNISHER
6 NEW IN TOWN
7 LONG KHONG
8 Inglourious Basterds
9 SUNDO
10 WATCHMEN / THE UNBORN

ERMITA

1 RACE to WITCH MOUNTAIN
2 12 ROUNDS
3 KNOWING
4 LONG KHONG
5 THE SECRET of MOONACRE / WATCHMEN
6 NEW IN TOWN
7 SUNDO

METRO EAST

1 THE SECRET of MOONACRE
2 KNOWING
3 12 ROUNDS
4 RACE to WITCH MOUNTAIN
5 NEW IN TOWN
6 SUNDO
7 THE PUNISHER / THE UNBORN
8 LONG KHONG

NOVALICHES

1 RACE to WITCH MOUNTAIN
2 KNOWING
3 12 ROUNDS
4 SUNDO

PIONEER

1 RACE to WITCH MOUNTAIN
2 KNOWING
3 12 ROUNDS
4 SUNDO

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STA. ROSA

1 RACE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN
2 KNOWING
3 12 ROUNDS
4 SUNDO

LIPA

1 SUNDO
2 RACE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN
3 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE
4 WATCHMEN

DASMARIÑAS

1 KNOWING
2 12 ROUNDS
3 SUNDO
4 RACE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN

IMUS

1 RACE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN
2 KNOWING
3 12 ROUNDS
4 SUNDO

ANGELES

1 KNOWING
2 12 ROUNDS
3 SUNDO
4 RACE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN

STARMILLS

1 KNOWING
2 12 ROUNDS
3 SUNDO
4 RACE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN
5 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE
6 THE UNBORN

BACOLOD

1 12 ROUNDS
2 KNOWING
3 SUNDO
4 GRAN TORINO
5 RACE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN
6 WATCHMEN

ILOILO

1 12 ROUNDS
2 KNOWING
3 SUNDO
4 YOU CHANGED MY LIFE
5 RACE TO WITCH MOUNTAIN
6 WATCHMEN

MOVIEWORLD

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We can be your venue for advance screenings, private film viewings, corporate and school events and other organizational functions.

CAGE as a scientist out to save the world

'Knowing' just doesn't know it's ridiculous

LOS ANGELES—"KNOWING" IS AN EARLY contender for worst movie of the year, if only because it takes itself so seriously. Pity, because the premise is intriguing.

Nicolas Cage stars as astrophysicist professor John Koestler, widower father of 11-year-old Caleb (Chandler Canterbury). Caleb and his classmates examine the contents of a time capsule that awakens at his elementary school buried 50 years ago, and he discovers a sealed letter containing rows after rows of jumbled numbers.

Dad wonders if there's a pattern there and, in a salutary-infused swipe, realizes that the message accurately predicts the date and number of dead in every major disaster since 1959...the Oklahoma City bombing, September 11, you name it. That's creepy as it is, but John looks closer and finds a box more events to come.

Hopping to prevent the ultimate catastrophe ahead, he sneaks down Diana (Rose Byrne), grown-up daughter of the little girl who originally scribbled those numbers. Diana is now the mother of a girl about Caleb's age (Lara Robinson).

Derailed

REVIEW

Here's where things literally go off the rails. Cage sunleephers it for the first half, then suddenly rejects his wide-range to heroic-eyes-bulging screaming and flailing. Also, director Alex Proyas ("The Crow," "I, Robot") goes from an eerie, atmospheric mood to an incoherent onslaught, with obviously fake CGIs and a deafening score. An early plane crash has its moments, but a subway accident is distractingly artificial.

Whereas by Ryne Pearson, Juliet Rickenden and Miles White, "Knowing" raises some philosophical questions about predestination vs. free will, only to abandon them for biblical mumbo-jumbo and cheap scares. Byrne gets expressibly shaky and shrill as the film approaches one of its many climaxes; it's as if she and Cage are in a contest to see who can shriek the loudest.

As the threat of the apocalypse draws closer, the level of ridiculousness gets pumped up to hilarious levels. Mysterious black cars appear everywhere—the sign of something God's never quite clear. Caleb and Diana's daughter start hearing the same whispers that tormented Diana's mother half-century earlier. Then a group of wild dudes who look like an albino boy band show up out of nowhere, everywhere, to protect those kids.

And so it's not even remotely terrifying anymore when John screams, "How am I supposed to stop the end of the world?" It's just laugh-out-loud funny. AP

New shows tell time-tested stories of faith, hope, renewal

FOR YEARS NOW, MANY LOCAL television hints been TV adaptations of old hit movies, like the current "Ang Babaeng Hinugot sa Aking Tadyang." The trend may be winding down and slowly but surely being replaced by new series mining an even older source: "Classic" old-direct tales and adventure yarns.

The first telenovela on hand off in this direction is "May Bukas Pa," obviously "inspired" by "Marcelino Pan y Vino." The European tale about a boy who talks to an image of Christ on the cross has been updated to a localized story about a bandying brought up by monks, who also converses with a statue of Jesus, which comes to life and turns the boy into a healer—not just of ailments, but also of troubled relationships.

"May Bukas Pa" has morphed the local TV trade with high ratings, indicating that telenovaers have an eagle to watch inspiring shows.

Right in the midst of time, another inspiring series is about to be aired—the new Dolphy classic, "Ukoy." It derives its title from the centuries-old story of Pinocchio, the toy boy carved out of wood by old Geppetto, the character to be played by Dolphy. (Making Marimba will portray Pinocchio.)

Interestingly, the Marcelino and Pinocchio stories are similar in one key aspect. They involve natures that come to life! How about that? More instructively, both new series are based on "classic" tales rather than hit movies. If "Ukoy" turns out as fun as rumored as "May Bukas Pa," the indigent trend could become the way to go for telenovas this year.

Adding to the excitement is the imminent start of a third telenovela, "Tayra," with Richard Gutierrez playing the title role. Granted, this is more of a old adventure tale rather than an inspiring story, but the "classic" inspiration still holds true.

We welcome this new development on the telenovela front, because we've had it up to here with all of those silly, outrageous fantasies and angst, sexy melodramas that our TV networks have been churning out for years. Let's hope that they'll be of better service to viewers, and inspire them with fine tales on time-tested sources of faith, hope and renewal.

Feedback

From Ray B. Sisenando, Sky Cable's VP for marketing: "We at Sky Cable would like to express our gratitude for ESPN. A contributed a lot in alleviating the complaints our office received regarding the issue on ESPN. You were right in stating that we listened and delivered to our subscribers' wishes when we put ESPN on analog channel 161. There is no motive to move surrounding the initial transfer of ESPN to channel 161. The Filipino household is our inspiration in crafting a dynamic programming lineup that is sensitive and responsive to the needs of our subscribers."

BUTS NOTES: We would like to take this occasion to request Sky Cable to add an arts and culture channel to its programming lineup. This is something that Filipinos viewers really need, and it would go a long way in boosting the nation's appreciation of the arts as a key component of our collective lives.

We assume Sky Cable (and other cable TV companies, for that matter) that an arts channel will enjoy good viewership in this country since many Filipinos feel there's a lack of culture in the broadcast media, and will go out of their way to support any move to make up for that check.

Arts-related TV networks that can cable channel portfolios may be able to tap for shows include: Classic Arts Showcase—includes video compilings of art, music, ballet, theatrical performance and classic films.

Ovation—a 15 cable TV network devoted to arts programming, available to some four million households from Maine to California.

Bay Epoch TV Cable Project—brings the best of programs to select cities in seven million homes, by acquiring works from independent film and video artists, activist organizations and community-based media groups. Public Television—features some shows on arts and cultures for educational TV use in and out of school.

Turner South—provides shows on Southern culture, stories, etc.

Smart Digital Television—live television feeds from dozens of networks around the world.

Legend at Big Dome tomorrow

GRAMMY AWARD-WINNING singer-songwriter John Legend performs tomorrow at the Araneta Coliseum. The 30-year-old R&B artist is here to promote his third and latest album "Evolver," become famous in 2006 via the multi-platinum record "Get Lifted"—which yielded the hit singles "Used to Love U" and "Ordinary People." Call 911-5555.

Magic & comedy

Comedian Rene Bito, magician Jeffrey Tan and ventriloquist Ony Carvajal come up for "Amagikomedyan 3" on March 27, 8 p.m. at the new Peta Theater, No. 3 Bernard Drive, New Manila, Quezon City (tel. 410-8833). Rene Bito (a.k.a. John Redrado) once starred in "Ang Bentig Boys," a Mikoleo segment on the TV gag show "Buhlit Gang." Tan has won awards for his sleight-of-hand tricks and is the first Filipino magician to be featured in a popular online cultural publication in the United Kingdom for the past eight years. Carvajal has been at the forefront of ventriloquism, as amateur and rarely seen theater act here, to local audiences.

Rock gig at One Esplanade

Synapsonic, Inthyeyenez and Chicosci are among the performers in "Break Free," a rock concert on April 3, 8 p.m. at One Esplanade, SM Central Business Park, Seaside cor. Bay Boulevard, Pasay City (near Mall of Asia). The show also features Protein Shake, Soapdish, Zelle and other bands. Proceeds will go to the livelihood program of Engineers, the Filipino-Chinese orchestra organized for De La Salle University Manila. Call 911-5555.

SHOW TIME

Diet shields GF from limelight

IT WAS SUCH A DELIGHT TO INTERVIEW Heather Mcomber for my daily show "Chikaboom!" with JC on Viva Cinema Channel. Since Diet and I are super close, it was such a candid and relaxed one-on-one.

Diet has never been happier. "After a roller-coaster relationship with Kristine Hermosa, it's so refreshing that my love life is more peaceful now and secure," Diet beamed. "My new girlfriend Gadi Pineda — half-Spanish, Miss Luzon Oriental is so supportive, an answer to my prayer."

As much as possible, Diet wants to shield her from the limelight. "I bring her to shows for events but I don't want her to give me many interviews," Diet said. "I don't want our relationship to turn into a circus."

In his ready to take the plunge again since the annulment of his marriage with Kristine has been granted? "I'm taking it slow this time. I just recovered from a tumultuous relationship so spider-measuring marathon ah."

There are times for meeting friends. This time Diet is enjoying where he is. Why wish when you don't want time to pass? Is forever about to start for Diet and his girl?

Eye to eye

Nadia Montenegro is still recuperating from her eye operation. Her medical condition has been a source of fun. She's now talking to make jokes with Gretchen Barretto after their heated exchange of words in the past.

"I was on the phone with Pops and Gretz happened to be with her," Nadi reveals. "She got the phone from Pipay and said 'Hi! Alright, alert! It lasted for 30 seconds. I appreciate it. Just after my ung-umay ng effort. I'd rather keep yesterday the chika and not have hated talk. It was an unforgettable moment."

After an eye surgery, Nadi is willing to use eye-to-eye with Gretz.

No big deal

Alessandra de Rossi paid me a surprise visit during my taping with JC for our show. It's always nice when fun being around her. Her joie de vivre is contagious.

Alex thinks the issue on Ara Mina becoming money from her sister Cristine Reyes doesn't set be a big deal. "Nothing wrong with asking help from your sis," Alex said. "Answers and Lifewise ran is each other for help. What are sisters do?" They're sisters of perpetual help.

Brat and Taya

Ogie Alcasid will concentrate more on his TV shows and movies this year. Unang-una ang concert niya sa Nobyembre. Ogie "The mutant" for the movie version of Spoiled Brat and Taya based on my character and Michael V's in Bubble Gang! Yih will also host a game show on cable/satellite yet (it's him. It's the Pinoy version of a popular show in Japan where contestants try to fit into tight holes of different shapes."

Ogie's career has never been in better shape.

Anime actor

Eat your daily dose of anime action with Studio 23's "Inuyasha" at 9:30 p.m., and "Samurai X" at 7:30 p.m. The adventures of vampire slayer Saya (Acosta) in "Blood + (Blood Plus)," based on "Blood the Last Vampire," the sixth-best selling anime of all time in the United States, airs Mondays at 7:30 p.m. for comedy and romance, catch the hit Mexican series "Las Trenzas" (weekdays, 10 a.m.) and the Korean version of the phenomenal "My Girl" (Mondays, 11 p.m.). Whoo-Hahaahaah!

Full house

It was "wow" with a capital O at the recent QTV 11 "Birit Show at the Cinema 2 of Greenhills 3, as the local lifestyle channel unveiled its impressive lineup of shows with a premiere night-style party-concert. The studs weren't very subtle any other as the entire program was held inside a movie house, reminiscent of a Hollywood prom screening.

The event was a box office hit, so to speak, as the screening played to a full house.

PHOOEY!: Happy, happy birthday to one of my best friends, Liezl Martinez. You have so much to live for, so hang on. I celebrate all the wonderful things you are in me. Love you like running forest Billy.

E-mail: mom@talkabout@hotmail.com

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

IN THIS life pinata, Bruce Willis, and Emma Heming arrive at the premiere of "The Home Stretch" in Los Angeles. The couple got married on his home in Parrot Cay in the Turks & Caicos Islands. AP

LIAM Neeson and Vanessa Redgrave at Sunday's funeral. AP

Boy-hunting balladeer

By the Inquirer staff

AND WE THOUGHT THE CHAMpion Ballinders was the only singer in the country not plagued with gay rumors. Till last raised plucked brown at Quezon City Circle with his sentimental trips to the evening ground, where he hunts for boys he can play with in private.

PBM means 'no'

Major Rex company seemed Suspected Actress to play the lead in an ensemble drama. BA, long retired and famed in the US, asked for a copy of the script. After reading it, she was heard that her only role is that was P2K and a gun bearing and a sea of living allowance throughout the show. She probably heard the script.

Head-hunting foiled

TV Korea never Kansas as "more or." Korean cable network reasons, they suspected, had been dispatched to prime Major Personality, a prized talent.

Clan of beauties

Mr. Filipinas Universe Pamela Bianca R. Manalo, 22, is not the only beauty queen in her family. Elder sister Katerina Manalo-Hernandez was 2002 Mr. Filipinas World and was in the top 10 of that year's Miss World pageant. Bianca's aunt, Nini Barros-Lizarraga, was 1968 Mr. Filipinas International, and was in the top 15 of the global search.

Bianca says her four-month flight-attendant training with Philippine Airlines served her in good stead during the competition. She also believes her devotion to the Santo Niño and the Virgin Mary helped. She still sleeps with an image of the Santo Niño at home, she says. She leaves for the Bahamas in August for Miss U.

New Mrs. Willis

LOS ANGELES— Bruce Willis' publicity agency, Rogers & Cowan, announced Sunday that the 54-year-old actor married Emma Heming, 30, a model/actress, in a small ceremony on his home in the Turks & Caicos Islands.

Guests included Willis' three daughters from his first marriage to actress Demi Moore—Rumer, 20; Scout, 17; and Tallulah Belle, 14, as well as Moore, and her husband, actor Ashton Kutcher. AP

Laid to rest

NEW YORK—British actress Natasha Richardson, who died on Wednesday after a skiing accident, was buried on Sunday, a spokesperson said.

Richardson, 45, was the daughter of famous Redgraves. The funeral was held in Saint Peter's Episcopal Church in Chappaqua, around 150 kilometers north of New York City. Richardson married fellow actor Liam Neeson at nearby Millbrook in 1994. AFP

* * *

Top of the talk shows

Her theme who trained last week-end's gabfests on TV. (And why we are missed, if we are missed.)

● Kris Bernal, asked to ease her relationship with Aljur Abrenica on a scale of 1 to 10:

"More than 10. Just kind-of-more-than-10 kasi nagmamahalan kami e kindi. Ang importante mapag-usapan ang anuhang relationship

natin." (SMT)

● Kris, asked if she was jealous of Ara Mina, who had intimate scenes with Aljur in a TV show:

"Siyempre. Ahahaw-mahaman ... (Wee waiting commitment ha?)

● Jessica Garcia, on mom Jean's love life:

"Dami kong nasa love niya ako. Cause kung ano-ano niyang tinatanong pero sa huliya nagsi." (Guess mom responds of Jessica?)

● Pops Fernandez, on her break-up with Jomari Yllana:

"Siyempre kung sa isa pinakita 'di ba?" (Hey to you, girl. Exactly.)

● Pops, on the verbal tussle between Jomari and ex-husband Martin Nievera:

"Hindi naman talaga Ashang ang comment [of Martin] but he chose to be a friend and I appreciate that. Hindi naman dapat na komalat pa." (Okay, stop na.)

● Pops, on the reason for the breakup:

"It will never be clear ... but there is closure. The hurting part is a very long process and the healing part sometimes takes longer." (Sorry, please.)

● Jomari's reaction:

"At times when you are blinded and you don't know what to do, you just pray." (We can guess why they broke up, actually.)

● Sam Milby on Sean Costin:

"Ah, both nagsuot on and ... agreed na sa'ri'r either not talk about each other." (Klear rin!)

● Glenlee Gramgon, on the annulment of his marriage to Kristine Hermosa:

"I'm glad that I am alive again." (Whoa.)

● Kristine, on his new love, Rona Lazar-Ostrozek:

"Super hindi natin inasinga eh." (Eh, sino ba'ng nagsigi-sigi?)

● Gabby Concepcion, on meeting face-to-face with Sharon Cuneta for the first time since their separation:

"Evening [was] okay. (Hey, sino naka Mega?)

(From Gurnali, The Buzz)

RUSHES

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

Alexis: I'll keep the edgy look

By Miss M. Erandio

ALMOST, BUT NOT QUITE.

This was the Sensation Idol? Season 8 judges' verdict on the performance of third runoff finalist Alexis Grace, who thought it was "too early in the game" for the Budget Meal™ sets present on the main Live Show.

The 21-year-old singer-nurse from Davao Norteness was voted out after singing Dolly Parton's "Jolene."

"It was flattering [that they considered using their wild-card] but ... they'd probably want to see it later in the show," Grace said in a conference call arranged by Star World.

Asked how she felt while singing her song the second time, Grace admitted she didn't quite hit some points. "I was upset. Sometimes you have bad nights. But's what happened."

You did look sad when you were standing there and they told you 'No.'

It was a little bit surprising because I never imagined myself going home that early.

When you were choosing songs for "Country Night," did you even consider doing a more contemporary song?

I felt like everybody knows "Jolene," and I thought it's such a pretty song that could get sympathy, as cp. panel is a contemporary number, like one by Carrie Underwood.

Looking back, do you think you'd have done better with another number?

I probably would have done better with "Green Green Grass of Home," which I sang earlier, because it's more my element—soul—that's what they loved about me, and what got me some attention.

Since you disconcerted by the fact that Randy Jackson's wouldn't remember your name?

Aside for that I think that's just his personality [and] not because I'm forgettable. I made a face when he called me Allison.

Are you going to keep your pink highlights and edgy look?

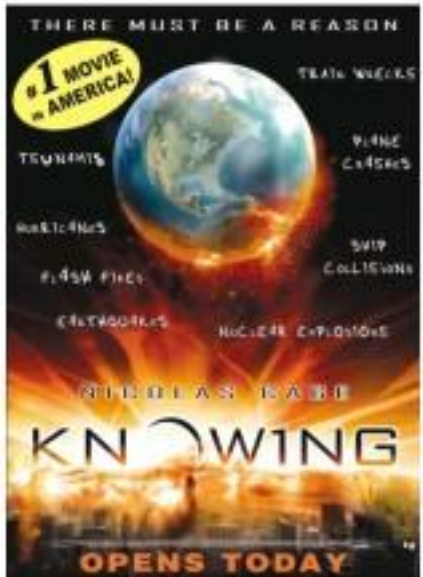
Definitely. I may change the pink highlights, I'm always into changing hairstyles, trying new things, but yes, I'll keep the edgy look.

There are fewer women than men this year. Do the women have to work harder?

No. We have to do our part and show more indie girls our finer value are going for all the boys that, hey, we're here, too.

"American Idol" Season 8 airs live Wednesday and Thursday, 8 p.m., on Star World with same-night replays at 10 p.m. and 11 p.m.

ALEXIS Grace



Censors chide 2 Kapamilya shows

By Marinel R. Cruz

THE MOVIE AND TELEVISION REVIEW and Classification Board (MTRCB) has reprimanded two ABS-CBN shows, one for "mocking the disabled," the other for "improper display of the Philippine flag."

In an archived report sent to MTRCB Chair Eliseo Fajardo Jr. on March 9, special board agents said there was "probable violation" of Section 3C of Presidential Decree 1986 in the Feb. 14 episode of the comedy show "Banana Split."

Not the first

According to the report, the show's "Dedicated Feeling" segment made "a mockery of cross-eyed people" when an actor said, "Isa-isa lang!" presumably because he has exercises eye-exposure for two.

"This is not the first time that MTRCB has issued a warning to ABS-CBN for this cause. The first was for 'Wowowee' a few years ago," Laguardia said because Eraserheadz's performance.

In another report, MTRCB special agents said there was "probable violation of the Flag Law" in the March 15 episode of "Eyewitness." The report stated, "The Philippine flag was displayed vertically, [instead of horizontally]," the report stated.

Laguardia cited a similar incident in another Kapamilya show two years ago. "A personnel of the Philippine National Police (PNP) had to sit down with us to explain the Flag Law in one of our meetings with MTRCB representatives," Laguardia recalled. "Producers such shows acting as news or newscasts should also be cautious about this, 'wag sibuhin' [to improve] our flag."

Laguardia added that a meeting with "Banana Split" producer Jessica Soho and Mercy Sunico or Jessica Gayl Demaro of "Tapang Dalawa" is scheduled next week.